

NISBET'S SELF-HELP SERIES

THE
DRAMATIC METHOD
OF TEACHING

H. FINLAY-JOHNSON

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ARITHMETIC GAME. SHOPS AND TABLES (p. 226).

[Frontispiece]

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Photo by:

RED CROSS KNIGHTS IN ARMOUR OF TEA-PAPER.

[Clarke & Hyde.]

his or her individual powers to make the plays a success (which in the children's opinion meant their being real and lifelike), and it was the equal right of teacher or child to say "So-and-so isn't playing the game," or in some other way to criticise the actions of others. It was equally a point of honour that persons so criticised should take the matter in good part and endeavour to put it right.

Our first plays were *historical plays* based on the historical novel, because—

1. The children were already interested in reading them and had formed fairly dramatic pictures of them in their own minds.
2. I desired that the children should act real characters, and not, at first, mythical or fairy creations. This did away with the idea of acting for display in the usual school entertainment way, which would considerably detract from the educational value, in that it would foster self-consciousness or nervousness.
3. The scholars had already, with my co-operation, formed a school library for use during school hours, and this contained a sufficient number and variety of books out of which to extract material for the dialogues and arrangements of their plays. In these books

they had already found many scenes dealing with real historical personages, which were easily adapted to the needs of school games and plays.

The point which I should like particularly to emphasise is that the earliest plays should deal with real persons. Children are generally sincere and love to deal with a story that is really true.

A great advantage of this new method of learning lessons by means of playing and acting them, lay in the fact that it was not absolutely necessary to have the lessons in one set room ;° they could as easily, or more easily, be played in the open air. Frequently we acted our History Plays on the Downs, in overgrown chalk-pits, or just in our own school playground.

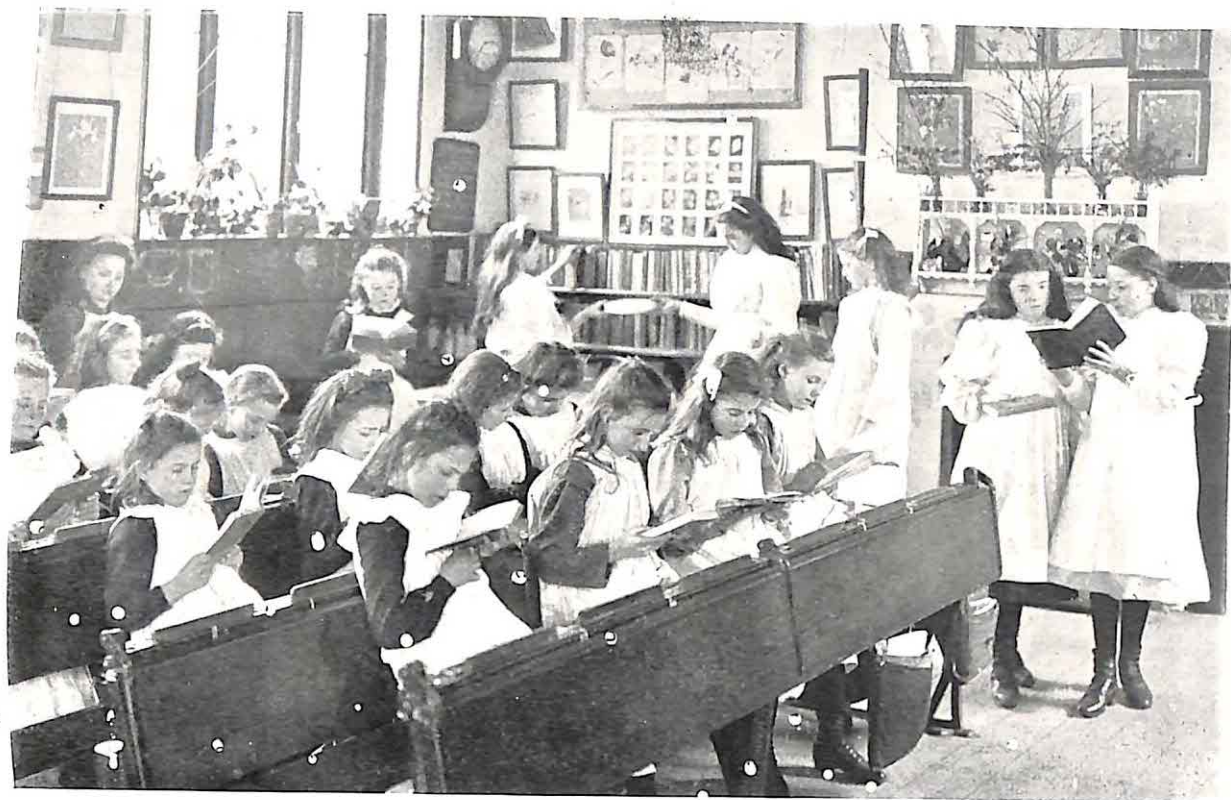
The advantage of this adaptability of situation lies in the fact that more movement and open-air conditions make for the improved health of teachers and scholars alike. In the history of education we appear to have arrived at a point in which we have to consider the advisability—or the reverse—of giving our scholars what is termed a practical education. Too often, it seems, the practical degenerates into the merely technical or utilitarian, and may usurp time which should be given to the humanities. Every one agrees that

childhood should be—and nearly always is—our happiest time of life ; when that is once over, there is “ something lost and gone ” that no subsequent happiness quite atones for. If this be true, then am I quite wrong when I say that childhood should be a time for merely absorbing big stores of sunshine for possible future dark times? And what do I mean by sunshine but just the things for which Nature implanted (in the best and highest part of us) an innate desire—the joy in knowing the beauties of the living world around us and in probing its mysteries ; the delights of finding sympathetic thoughts in the best of our Literature (a Literature unrivalled in the world !) ; the gradual appreciation of the beautiful in Art ; the desire which all these bring to burning youth to be up and “ doing likewise ” ; the awakening of the young enthusiasm, even of merely evanescent youthful dreams, instead of the soul-deadening monotony and limitation of technical instruction—these are the things that count. Let the boy who delights in experiment and investigation follow his bent, and, when he himself is ready and eager for it, then supply the necessary technical instruction. Do not damp and kill the fires of young enthusiasm, they make the world go round : our dreamers have been our real workers after all—they “ dreamed dreams and saw visions ” and probed things new,

while they of the earth, earthy, were content to toil mechanically—as beasts having no understanding. You cannot turn out scientist or artist without a training in the humanities. And we are not required to *teach* the humanities, but to allow our boys and girls in their natural enthusiasm to absorb them from the environment which we can at least help to place around the youth of England.

Curiously enough the most striking result of teaching by means of the “play” in school is that children become really practical—in the best sense of the word—although we set out to ignore the practical and pay attention to the humanities.

And, one other plea for the dramatic method of teaching in school: it makes for greater happiness of both scholars and teachers. We all do our best when we are happy. Most of us are happier when conscious of giving pleasure to others. A great many persons are of opinion that, “as the teacher—so the class.” I believe, at all events, that the temper of the teacher must necessarily react on the class; and I know that thunder-clouds of impatience or mists of disappointment are quickly dispelled by the sight of happy, healthy children entering with zest into their interesting dramatic plays, and that hardened and deadened indeed must be the teacher who could resist the happiness radiated by children anxious to play well,



BOOKS FROM THE LIBRARY SHELVES BEING USED INSTEAD OF THE ORDINARY READING BOOKS.

looking for the encouragement shown by the approbation of fellow-scholars and teacher.

But it may be argued that all these results might possibly be obtained in the usual school lesson—by making the ordinary lessons more interesting by means of pictorial illustrations or by the teacher's telling the children stories inculcating the lessons in hand. And I reply that it is more in keeping with child nature not to sit constantly "as a passive bucket to be pumped into." I know that, as a child, while I promptly forgot all my "school" history (taught, no doubt, in what ought to have been the most interesting fashion, with anecdote and illustration), I have still a clear and lively recollection of the history (and other things) which I acted with my chums after school hours. All the same, my scholars *do* remember an enormous amount of detailed history and fact—not to mention such things as genealogical tables (bane of all children), dates, and statistics—which they have absorbed unconsciously during their plays and the preparation of plays.

I expect most people have recollections of the time in their life when action seemed the keynote of their character. Robert Louis Stevenson, who understood children better than most people, says: "We grown-up people can tell ourselves a story, all the while sitting quietly by the fire. This is

exactly what a child can not do, or does not do—at least, when he can do anything else. He works all with lay figures and stage properties. When his story comes to the fighting he must rise, get something by way of a sword, and have a set-to with a piece of furniture until he is out of breath."

Young scholars entering the school from another school very soon fell into the ways and discipline of ours; which, I think, showed that our method worked on natural lines, although it was a contrast to that generally prevailing.

I remember being much struck by hearing the inspector for our district say at an educational meeting that very few lady teachers possessed a sense of humour—or at least he never found them exercising it. I have found it a great safety valve occasionally. How often in life a sense of humour at the right moment may prevent the tragedy of life from striking too deeply! Perhaps that is why the Irishman instinctively cultivates and exercises his wit and humour. He certainly has plenty of "distress" to warrant it. This by the way!

By humour I do not mean the silly frivolity which characterises so many children—the giggling at mere foolishness which would, of course, upset any school, but just the ability to see the humorous side when it ought to be seen. We frequently had amusing little unrehearsed effects in our plays which

might have resulted in quarrels or teasing and so upset "plays" in school. Then it was that the ability to "see the joke" saved the situation. I think a sense of humour—duly harnessed—is a valuable asset even for a business man (although I did not profess to be training business men—Heaven forfend!). On one occasion we were acting the insurrection of Jack Cade, and Cade was being slain in Iden's garden. He should have said: "Oh, I am slain! Famine and no other hath slain me." What he did say was: "Oh, I am slain! Salmon and no other hath slain me." A hearty laugh interrupted his beautiful death peroration. When we explained his slip no one laughed more heartily than he. But it was remarkable that once the laugh was legitimately and naturally out, every one fell to once more with the play.

CHAPTER II

THE TEACHING OF HISTORY BY PLAYS

OUR first attempt at Drama as a legitimate school lesson was concerned with History. We had been reading Sir Walter Scott's "Ivanhoe" as an adjunct to the study of the reign of Richard Cœur de Lion and his times. I think we were all thoroughly imbued with the atmosphere of *romance* and *derring-do*, and the boys in particular seemed ready for suiting the action to the word. The train was laid; it needed but the match to fire it! And here, kind reader, notice that the foundation and basis of our play was literature—not from the ordinarily accepted school "reader" containing a little bit about cotton, a little bit about coal, a scrappy extract from a "good" writer, with a poem about an impossible little girl, who sewed "as long as her eyes could see" (so bad for her eyes, too!); the whole interlarded with moral maxims, conveying practically nothing to a child, and seasoned with a pinch of "tables" and another of "difficult" words in columns! (What was the *general atmosphere* shed around you, gentle reader, when you

daily read such a tome?) No. In our school the whole book as it left the mind of its writer is placed on the open library shelf to be read by every interested scholar.

The practical-minded reader will probably now be delighted to have a description of our first play. It was a rainy day. All day long play out of doors had been impossible; so I started with a good supply of bottled energy and "instinct for play" ready to command. A little talk with the children of the upper classes and a discussion on the characters in the book led to such remarks from the boys as: "If I had been So-and-so, I should have done so-and-so"; and as play out of doors was out of the question, some one soon suggested "Couldn't we play at 'Ivanhoe' indoors?" From that time I had no further doubts as to whether the play in school could be successfully managed. But there was nothing brilliant to outsiders from a spectacular point of view.

To us who were "in it," the schoolroom was really the lists at Ashby-de-la-Zouche, or any other place our imagination desired. But an outsider only saw the restricted space in front of an ordinary class. No time was wasted at first in arranging scenes or casting parts. It took but a few seconds for the boys to settle on a rosy, round boy for a jovial Friar Tuck, who at once deposited himself under a high spindle-

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legged desk which he dubbed his hermit's cell. "I'm the Black Knight," said another, dragging his black jersey over his head for a suit of chain mail. "Let me be your horse," volunteered another, proffering the necessary "back." Soon the play was in full swing, although it might not seem very encouraging to the enthusiast (burning to "improve" the children) to hear Friar Tuck, forgetting the text of the book, retort "Shan't," when the Black Knight thundered with his trusty "pointer" on the spindle-legged desk, demanding admittance or "the road." The same Friar Tuck imbibed ink when desiring to show the bibulous tendencies of his prototype in the book, and when told by his onlookers that he ought to sing loudly, improvised quite an appropriate refrain to the words "Tol-de-rol-lol." No one laughed, and none were at all profane when he changed the tune to, "While shepherds watched their flocks by night," as the nearest substitute he could find for a monkish Latin chant. There was plenty of interest, plenty of life, no ill-temper, and a sufficiency of self-expression both verbal and facial.

It has always been an axiom in matters of school method that one of the first essentials in teaching any subject should be, "first arouse the *desire to know*." When our scholars began to dramatise their lessons, they at once developed a keen desire to know many things which hitherto had been matters

of pure indifference to them. For instance, after their initial performance of scenes from "Ivanhoe," they soon began to study the book closely to supply deficiencies in dialogue, and when dialogue was rendered according to the book it had to be memorised (voluntarily), and this led to searching questions after meanings and allusions—some of which the elder scholars soon learned to find in the dictionary. Here, then, was "English" studied voluntarily, by young country children, to the enrichment of their vocabulary and the satisfactory rendering of plays for their own recreation. An enormous amount of general knowledge can be acquired in the hunt for meanings and derivations of words. For example, the sentences: "Doth the Grand Master allow me this combat?" "I may not deny what thou hast challenged, if the maid accepts thee as her champion," led to questions from the young actor impersonating the Grand Master as to what he was Grand Master of, and a consequent description of the order of Knights Templars, crusaders, and the Holy Wars. This further led up to an allusion to the fact that a preceptory of the Knights Templars once existed not far from the school, and so to some local Church history. By the time the subject was exhausted, every one had quite a good stock of knowledge acquired quite pleasantly and permanently. They had made acquaintance with such terms as "palmer," "minstrel," "tournament,"

"chivalry," and "challenge"; and they had learned a great deal of the way in which trade had extended and improved through the spirit of adventure, which prompted men to travel and extend their horizon and experience.

Each subsequent performance of scenes from "Ivanhoe" showed a marvellous improvement in knowledge and intelligence of the right kind. The scholars themselves, even while inventing probable conversations not recorded verbatim in the book either consciously or unconsciously kept up the style and "period" in their own diction. They showed the greatest resourcefulness in getting over difficulties such as must occur when boys and girls have to leave school permanently or be absent temporarily. Always one or other would come forward ready and anxious to do the necessary work. The scholars themselves suggested costume and slight properties, which the girls contrived out of silver paper tea wrappings supplied from their homes. What mattered it if the mystic words "Ceylon Tea, 1s. 4d. per pound" appeared writ large in sable on the hero's shield? We saw only the shield of a Red Cross Knight. Such delightful surprises, too, would the boys spring on us. One morning it was a set of horse brasses bestowed on the joyful recipient by a carter. Picture how delighted the crowd was in the playground that morning while the proud owner produced them one



Photo by

Clarke & Hyde.

THE CORONATION OF WILLIAM AND MARY.

(Showing Court ladies in their "priceless" window curtains, the Sceptre and Sword of State.)

by one and fitted them on the "war horse," how, of course, Ivanhoe, the champion, must have that horse, how the eager crowd trooped in to show their treasures to me, and how truly good and happy they were when, time-table notwithstanding, we rehearsed, and I raised no objection to the war-horse's curvetting, stamping, and jingling its brasses. Why, it was a *real* tournament!

Then, of course, the question arose as to what should be the proper song for Friar Tuck to sing if he might not sing "While shepherds watched," which ended in a scholar's discovering a song which *he* thought appropriate and which turned out to be "There were three ravens sat on a tree—Hey-adown-hey derry derry down," which was, I think, sufficient advance on the first attempt to prove encouraging to the most pessimistic of pedagogues. On an inquiry being raised for a tune for "Troll the brown bowl to me, bully boy," none was forthcoming, so Friar Tuck improvised quite in the style of the "Three Ravens." But eyes, ears, and minds were kept alert, and, joy of joys, one day an inspector visited the school who, when the song time arrived, could supply the tune. He sang it over once to the most attentive audience I have ever known, and when he had gone away every child knew that tune and could sing lustily, "Ho, jolly Jenkin—I spy a knave drinking." I contrasted this with some of the laborious lessons

on five set school songs that I have known in schools—dead bones of songs, having no responsive chords in the hearts of British boys and girls!

And I feel convinced that my scholars, while playing, had learned far more of the English language, history, and withal romance, than I could ever have *taught* them by means of blackboard, columns of classified words, and Latin "roots" more suited to adult students possessed of a goodly store of voluntary attention and will power—to whom, by the way, I do not believe it would be very enthralling! And surely there is no such virtue in blackboard and chalk that they should be deemed so very essential in the teaching of all subjects in school. How much more in keeping with child nature is it to conceal the "powder" in the "jam," and to work with live puppets at play so that the end is reached through pleasant means.

Our first plays were then what I term *adapted* plays worked up from historical novels; and when I had watched and helped through the first trial play, I began to see how it might be possible to throw more of the actual lessons, including their preparation and arrangement, on to the scholars themselves. I had long felt instinctively that the ordinary "notes of lessons"—even the best of them—were open to serious objection. For the best of notes, prepared by the teacher with laborious care overnight, presuppose an attitude of mind which

may, in the morning, be missing from the class, as a whole, or from individual children. The teacher who prepares her notes and says, "Now I will say this, and the scholars will reply so-and-so," finds that her "best laid schemes" may "gang a-gley," and that the unexpected most often happens, for the scholars' minds may not work according to the prepared "notes," and friction is the result instead of harmony. Besides, more than half the benefit of the lesson lies, in my opinion, in the act of preparing it, in hunting its materials out of hidden sources and collecting them into shape. Most people know that the best way to learn a thing is to try to impart it. If any weakness in knowledge exists, it appears directly we try to impart our facts consecutively. How much better, for instance, it is to hunt out one's own botanical specimens and study them in their own native haunts than to have a set of dried specimens, carefully collected and preserved by some one else, put right into one's hands, together with a full explanation and description of their peculiarities, order, class, and habitat! If the scholars know that they have to prepare certain scenes in order that they may, by such agency, impart certain facts to their fellow-students, they immediately feel the responsibility and derive the full benefit from the lesson because they "find it" themselves, little by little, and are receptive to the highest degree because they intend at once

making use of what they have found. They learn to "feel their feet" under them—to stand alone—to find and use their own powers.

Children, too, have a wonderful faculty for teaching other children and learning from them. Uncontrolled this faculty is generally used for getting one another into mischief. But diverted into other channels it may have a great influence for good.

Children know by instinct how to get ideas into their companions' minds where a teacher will fail for lack of the sympathetic touch. Another strong argument in favour of allowing children to impart knowledge to others is that the scholars in any one class will most probably be all of the same county, social station, and limited to the same vocabulary—hence they will assuredly find the correct terms of expression to convey the necessary intelligence to their hearers. I have frequently found this occurring in our improvised school plays, and have been delighted to hear quite clever paraphrases and translations into Sussex dialect; showing, as they did, such complete grasp of the author's meaning.

It was not only boys who could adapt plays. Suitable parts and plays were found for and by the girls. In "Ivanhoe," of course, there was a "Rebecca" and a "Rowena." And I can assure my readers that nothing could have excelled the simplicity and quiet dignity with which they prepared and went through their parts. Naturally in



Photo by

Clarke - Hyde

THE KNIGHTING OF RALEIGH.
(Note the jealousy of the Courtiers.)

historical plays, boys' parts predominated. But the girls did their full share of assisting in the preparation of plays and in making notes of all the scenes which had to be compiled or invented. This brings me to an important point in the dramatisation of lessons. The clerical side is not by any means neglected. Rather is it made more arduous (but the children are unconscious of this since it is voluntary and determined in amount by themselves). Having found by disappointing experience that lovely speeches, drawn from, perhaps, two or three different books, were forgotten at the critical moment, or rendered badly, the scholars made a point of writing out their speeches in full, and *in their own time!* Their reward was, that they convinced their audiences.

One can easily see how children may unconsciously absorb the art of spelling by encountering new words during the act of writing out notes or parts. And similarly they fall into the art of good composition and style in just the way we grown-ups model and re-model our styles—on the plan of unconsciously imitating the styles of good writers with a dash of ourselves thrown in. Here, then, are two of the "Three R" bogies tackled without tears—Reading and Writing. Reading for information and immediate profit (not to speak of longer deferred and more lasting results, of which more anon), is "reading with intelligence," and

this no one can deny ; and writing—not a mere “ exercise ” for the sake of writing and correction, with visions of the waste-paper basket looming large in the background—but writing for a purpose and for preservation for present and future use. (In a subsequent volume I may write an explanation of how we prepare children in the infant school and lower classes for the technical difficulties of writing and composition.)

The *sources* from which the scholars drew their adapted plays were always placed within their reach. In one corner of the schoolroom the boys themselves have erected four long shelves, made out of disused gallery desks. On these shelves we formed a collection of books, including as many good historical novels as we could, and endeavouring to obtain at least one good one on each reign or period of English history. Such books as Lytton's “ Harold,” Kingsley's “ Heroes ” and “ Hereward the Wake,” Scott's “ Kenilworth,” “ The Talisman,” and “ The Abbot,” “ The Last of the Barons,” “ Lorna Doone,” several good tales of sea adventures of the times of Raleigh, Drake, and Fro-bisher ; as many good history books as we could collect, really good manuals—a “ Green,” and a “ Fletcher ”—found a place on our shelves. Particularly useful books were collections of stories from the original authorities of British History. We had various books which contained stories bearing on

every reign, and these stories were translated or adapted from the best known authority on each subject, so that we regarded them as authentic.

These books were left in an easily accessible place with no locked doors, or elaborate cupboards where they might be stored and neglected. Every scholar knew that, as soon as he or she could read, the books might be freely consulted and used for reading, reference, or making notes at any time, either before, after, or during school hours. Our free system of discipline allowed scholars to hold quiet discussions together—either at the library shelf or in their desks—and I found the more I trusted them, the more trustworthy and unsuspecting they became. One would see a child quietly get up, walk to the shelf, hunt through the books for a probably useful one on the subject in hand, spend a little quiet time turning the pages, become absorbed, raise its head and say, "Miss Johnson, there is so-and-so in this book!" or "Here's the very thing we want—can't we put this in such-and-such a play?" or take out a notebook, always kept handy, and busily make pencil notes.

There was often quite a rush for the driest of history books, because such books supplied all the facts without too much padding, and were most useful and reliable in tracing the life histories of notable personages. Biographies for the same reason were eagerly sought for—not because the

scholars had been told to learn biographies, mark you, but because they had, *for themselves*, discovered their intrinsic value. I cannot too often or too strongly insist on this point, viz., the way in which the dramatic method and its adjuncts made the scholars self-reliant, mainly self-taught, and self-developing. How many generations of children have turned with disgust and loathing from the dry-as-dust text-book (for examination purposes)—history served up to them in an indigestible mass! I, myself, have been amongst the number. After all, it makes all the difference in the world how one's food is served up. If it looks attractive and dainty, our mutton-chop is eaten with relish. But the same mutton-chop may, under its disguise of grease, water, and "blacks," make us turn from it with loathing. Just as food enjoyed nourishes the body, so lessons enjoyed are readily assimilated by the mind. So, instead of turning from the dry text-books and fact-lore, my scholars voluntarily asked for them and used them well. It was the case over again of the mutton-chop rendered attractive. Why? Because we had put the text-book *in its proper place*—not as the principal means, but merely as a reference and for assistance. It has often been urged against our method that it taught the scholars to rely on themselves too much and on books too little—that they neglected books too much. The fact is, the basis of all their work was, as



Photo by

Charles H. H. H.

TRIAL OF CHARLES I.
(Coke, Clerk of the Court, reading the charge.)

one may see, not one book, or a few, but many books.

No play was adapted from any one book. All the authorities on the subject of the play were consulted, got together in note form and reviewed. The best material out of each was then collected and any hiatus supplied from the intelligent imagination of any member of the class who hit the "public opinion" on the matter. (We were a very united community!)

As soon as the necessary material—or, at least, sufficient to make a fair start—had been collected,—the next step was, naturally, to choose characters, cast parts, and either read the play through or tentatively rehearse. Here, again, our system of freedom with discipline served us in good stead. It did not take very long to discover amongst the scholars a bold moving spirit. In other circumstances he might have been warped into a ring-leader or black sheep. I soon found I had merely to say to him, "Mike, suppose you take the books and go with the boys up to the top of the playground. I dare say you could all manage to choose your parts and try what sort of a play you can make from what you have collected." In less time than one could think possible, they would be back, tapping on the schoolroom door with the play in such a condition that we would be quite astonished at the originality and individuality shown. At the same time one of the most noticeable

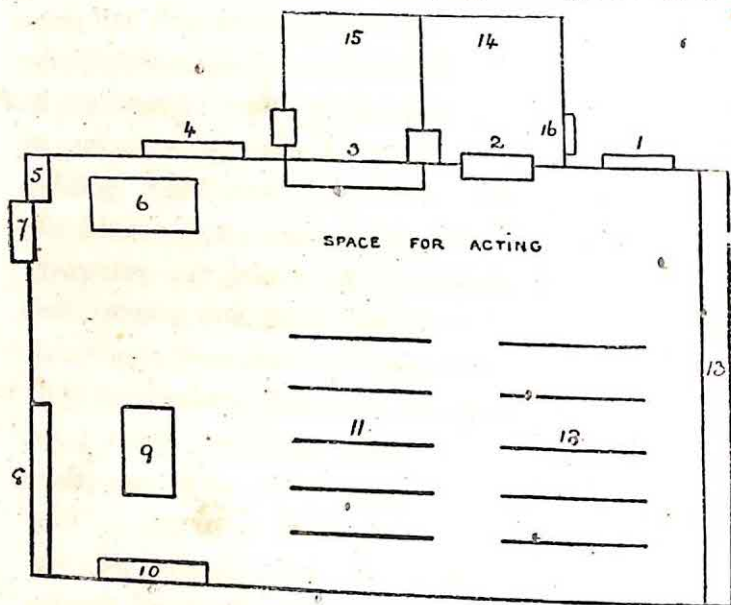
features was the way in which the scholars, children as they were, would bring out, apparently quite casually and without effort, the salient points of the history they were engaged in *learning* without being taught formally. They showed, too, a marvellous aptitude for casting the right people for parts, in which task they were doubtless much aided by Mike and his successors. No doubt, too, the tone of the school—its new school tradition—helped those, who felt they could interpret a part, to declare themselves, and it seemed an unwritten law that any one who volunteered in this way should be given a fair trial; the volunteer always realising that, if he were unsuitable in the opinion of the majority, he should make way for some one else.

"What happened to the scholars for whom no parts could be found?" I hear you ask. Whenever it was possible, they were worked into a "crowd" of citizens, or an "army" or a "crew." But where this was out of the question they sat in their desks and formed a "chorus," whose duty it was to announce players, fill up gaps in the play with explanations, tell dates, and give suggestions. In fact, they were made by every means to feel they were necessary to and a part of the play, and of course they learnt a great deal of History and "English" by listening and commenting, and they were very active at this. This all did away with the idea of "audience" and consequently with "acting

for display," self-consciousness, nerves, and possible jealousy and heart-burnings, of which, of course, we desired to steer clear.

As regards space, apparatus, properties, and time, we used — when acting in school — merely the ordinary space in front of the class — about 20 ft. by 6 ft. or rather less. A door opening out of it led into the entrance lobby and another door led into the classroom which could be used in an emergency. We found this extremely handy when, as often happened, one scholar had to impersonate two characters and needed a quick change. Our apparatus was very simple. It consisted mainly of the school furniture — which I am sure pleased the scholars more than the most elaborate scenery I could have provided. They simply howled with delight when Charles II. was hidden in a *real* cupboard — the more so as Charles proved to be a very substantial boy, highly difficult to stow away between narrow shelves. He comported himself like a true "Royal Martyr" of the Stuart brand and endured agonies of thumpings and pummellings by the anxious actors who desired to shut the cupboard door before the Roundheads arrived. Ingenuity decreed, on another occasion, that Scrooge (of Dickens's "Christmas Carol" fame) should look out of a window composed of the top of a blackboard easel with a movable rail for hanging diagrams before the class. The class enjoyed this tre-

mentously and the inventor was loudly praised. That was a very noticeable outcome of the method of work : scholars would always praise good work



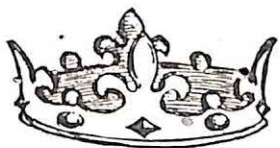
- | | |
|------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 WINDOW | 7 DOOR |
| 2 DOOR | 8 LIBRARY |
| 3 CUPBOARD | 9 TABLE |
| 4 WINDOW | 10 CUPBOARD |
| 5 CUPBOARD | 11 } DESKS |
| 6 PIANO | 12 } |
| | 13 CUPBOARDS |
| | 14 & 15 PORCHES |
| | 16 OUTER DOOR TO PLAYGROUND |

PLAN OF SCHOOLROOM.

in others ; and if their companions appeared unnoticed when praise was due, they drew attention to the good work done by them.

When reading, a short while ago, Richard Jefferies' book "Bevis," I came across a paragraph which emphasises very strongly my plea for self-made and self-planned properties. Here it is: "He knew that the greatest pleasure is always obtained from inferior and incomplete instruments. Present a perfect yacht, a beautiful horse, a fine gun, or anything complete to a beginner, and the edge of his enjoyment is dulled with too speedy possession. The best way to learn to ride is on a rough pony" ("Bevis," p. 217).

The boys, of course, always enjoyed battle scenes to the full, and made different "properties" for use in different battles in order that the various reigns and periods might not be confused. Thus for battles in early English times they manufactured "brown bills" out of cardboard (for the metal work) and broom handles. Big brothers and fathers at home became interested at this point and "properties" began to come in to us so fast, and so well worth



preserving for future use, that we had to set up a cupboard for storing them. Thus, one father made a beautiful brass crown with coloured glass jewels inset. Another made us a headsmen's axe, copying the design out of Harrison Ainsworth's "Tower of London." It was a really cleverly made affair, and we had no accidents

with it, although it was made of bright metal, which shows how well we had all got ourselves in hand. Several people presented us with wooden swords—the blades were silvered—and generally the handles were of bent tin and had some little realistic touch. An elder brother carved and contrived some daggers in sheaths which had “blood”-stained points. Again, in this instance, the design had been faithfully copied from a history book; the carver was a previous scholar of the school, still keeping up his interest. But the most thrilling battle scenes were those in which firearms were used, especially when we re-enacted them near the Fifth of November. Then fireworks were cheap and get-at-able. For a “cannon” the boys would enlist the services of a drain-pipe mounted on a pair of small perambulator wheels. When fireworks were inserted in the drain-pipe and ignited the “cannon” would emit smoke and sparks, and *sometimes* bang most realistically. It was always a point of honour that several of the “enemy” should fall “dead” when the cannon roared. If the numbers were small and they could not really be spared, they sneaked up again when no one was looking that way. In planning our armies we always found out the real numbers on each side from the history books and kept ours as nearly as possible in proportion. Thus, in “Agincourt” we ranged our English and French seven to one. In

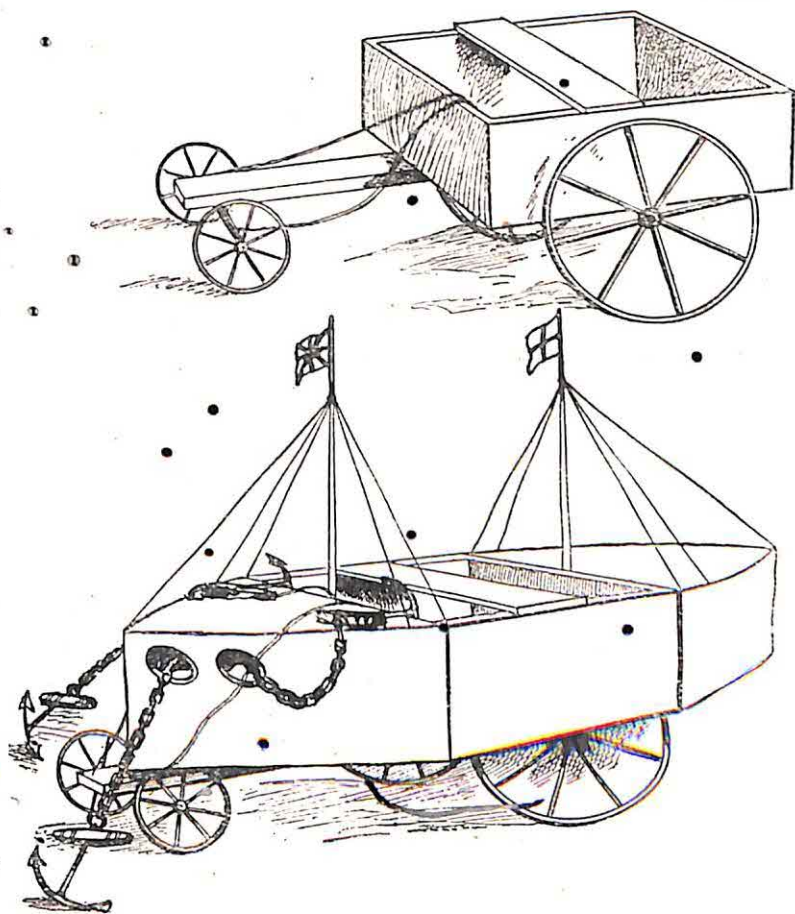
the trial of Charles I. we arranged that the court should contain six men to represent sixty, and the "Chorus" always told us there were sixty men present—this by the way. After a real good battle our schoolroom was often more smoky and gunpowdery, I am sure, than a real battlefield; for the girls simulated the rattling of musketry by throwing fresh laurel leaves on the schoolroom fire, where they crackled, sputtered, and smoked.

A sea-fight was grand, and we refought many a one between English and Dutch. For these battles I allowed the boys to bring their soap-boxes on wheels, generally preferring those with guiding wheels in front. It was great fun when the boys manœuvred into position (after many capsizings and accidents) with their cannon and firearms on board. Once the Dutch leader had his box boat turned into the semblance of a real ship by covering it with cardboard over a canework skeleton and rigging masts and sails of paper. To add the realistic touch each boy had plenty of chains on his boat to rattle when he dropped or hoisted anchor. And did we see *one* dull, listless child in school on the afternoon when we let the boys really capture boats and tow them away prisoners? I rather think not. And the next morning, long before nine o'clock, I surprised all the first class boys with heads together over a history book with illustrations, reading up material for another bout with Van Tromp. The soap-

boxes on wheels (cube sugar-boxes, too, sometimes) were one of our most valuable assets. Mark you, they cost ratepayers or State £0 os. od. ; the boys picked the wheels up from ragmen or marine stores for 2d. each, and found them very handy in their own little gardens, using the boxes as wheelbarrows. Anon they did duty for ships on voyages of discovery to other lands, and were very skilfully manipulated past dangerous shores, where desks—I mean *capes*—projected. Queen Elizabeth's state barge was a soap-box—on this occasion draped in red cloth. If no soap-box turned up on History day, however, no one was at a loss, for a form, inverted, was slowly and gracefully dragged across the floor with her Majesty seated thereon. Charles II. escaped to France in a disused hip-bath which rocked beautifully. From the same bath fishermen on the Volga hooked giant "fish" in the shape of the school dusters. One of the most comical properties was a set of brown-paper animals' skins, into which small boys would creep and add a very realistic touch to geography and other plays. "Mike" before mentioned designed and painted these, and the girls sewed them up. Another ingenious boy made a suit of Saxon serf's garments out of sacking, and sewed them at home by himself. The girls, of course, could do much in making costumes, and we soon found certain stock garments were wanted and were made for most History plays, which, of course,



saved the trouble of making fresh costumes every time. For instance, there was generally a king, and of course he would wear a crimson cloak

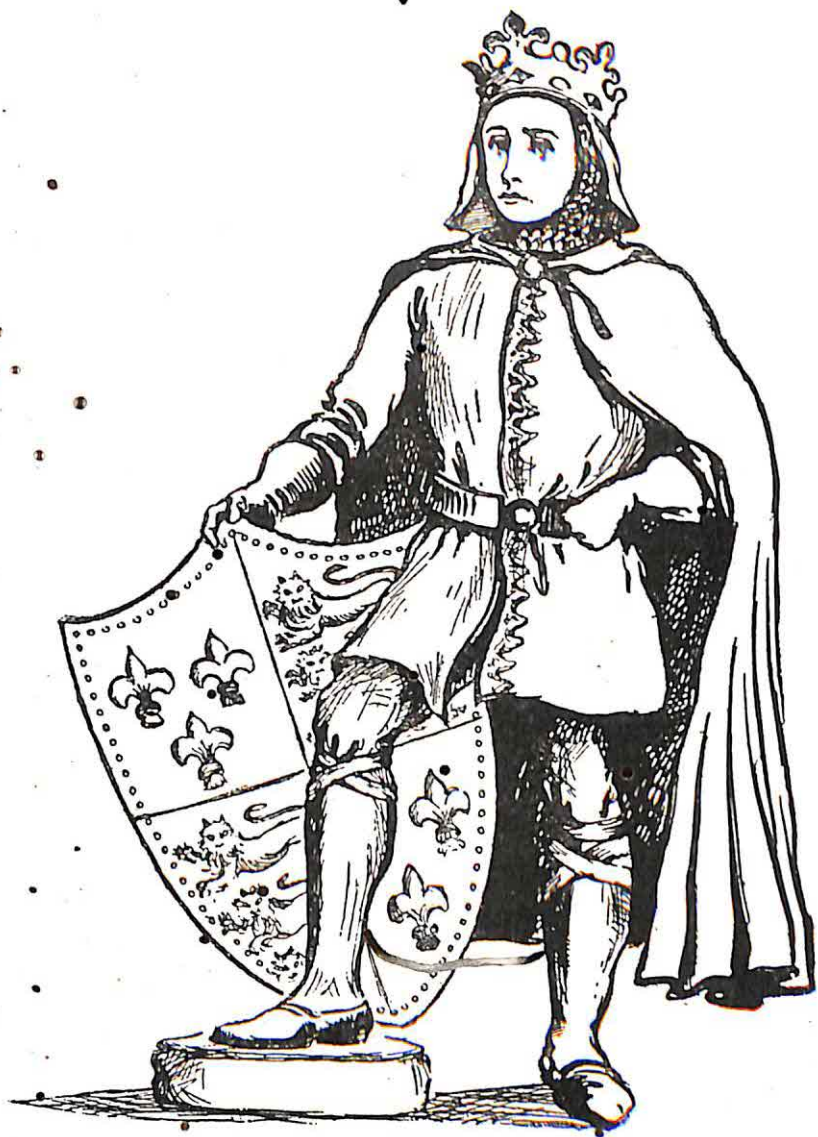


SOAP-BOXES AS SHIPS.

trimmed with ermine (wadding painted with dots of ink) and a crown. A sceptre was made by a father out of a brass bed-post cut short. It was

useful also to have a bishop's mitre of brown paper covered with gold paper. Queen and court ladies' robes were fashioned of white lace window curtains pinned at the shoulders and allowed to trail. A court jester's cap and bells were easy to make. A few pairs of sateen knickers and short cloaks were also made by the girls from a pattern supplied by a scholar's mother, and they could be adapted to many periods. Coarse string or knitting-cotton knit up into "shirts of mail" was dyed with ink and afterwards touched up with silver paint to give a tarnished metal appearance. Ladies' disused black stockings made long "trunk-hose" for the boys. A crowning triumph was the fashioning, by the girls, of naval officers' coats, for use by Nelson and his officers, out of old black and navy blue skirts with large silver-papered buttons. True, Hardy soon grew out of *his* coat and looked as funny as a Cruikshank illustrations, with his waist buttons half-way up his back and his wristbands almost at his elbows.

The tea-paper armour was always mounted on either stout brown paper or cardboard, so that it should not become ragged. We found ordinary paper-fasteners very handy for joints, and where it was possible to use them they were more handy than sewing. Paper-fasteners also made very effective "studs" for shields, and the most effective costume we ever made was one for Edward when we played "The Burghers of Calais." We cut out a large shield



KING EDWARD III. AND HIS SHIELD.

in cardboard and bent it slightly. This we covered carefully with white cartridge paper, overlapping the paper at the edges and fastening it to the cardboard with brass paper-fasteners as "studs." Then we cut out the Royal Arms of England in gold paper and carefully pasted them on the shield. We then made Edward a surcoat of white calico and bordered it with gold paper. Our method of fastening gold paper to calico was our own, and we found it easy to work. We mixed a tablespoonful of starch with boiling water, and when it cooled pasted our strips and patterns of gold paper upon the back. These we laid carefully in position on the calico and then ironed them flat with a hot flat-iron. The patterns then looked as though they had been painted or embroidered on the garment. This form of decoration was easy and effective, and looked especially well when the golden fleur-de-lys was used as the pattern for bordering. Odd strings of beads given from time to time by the scholars answered for "jewels," and our armoury included some home-made bows and arrows. These articles were all kept in one cupboard, duly labelled, ready for immediate use, and were looked upon in the light of school apparatus as much as sets of historical readers or piles of slates—and we considered them no more trouble to attend to and keep tidy. We found that children of the upper classes were generally of a fairly uniform size, and we always renewed such things as paper



Photo by

CHARLES J. MERRING FARNWELL TO HIS CHILDREN

(Clarke & Hyde)

headgear, when a new actor had to take a certain part, so that there should be no fear of infection.

We tried, if possible, to arrange so that the boy who had once been a king should not be another king—at all events during the same school year. We hoped in this way to avoid confusion of reigns in the scholars' minds. We treated all important personages, such as Nelson, in the same way.

The time occupied by History *plays* proper consisted of that set apart for History *lessons*; because we considered our play in the light of a lesson. We had two of these each week, one of a half-hour's duration and one of one hour. Preparation had to occupy the scholars' own leisure time and odd minutes in school, many of which would otherwise have been wasted, while for the making of notes an occasional writing lesson was set apart. Once a week we had what we termed a "library morning," when scholars were allowed each to take a book from off the library shelf and read it silently in the desks. Questions might be asked and answered, and little discussions were permitted, so long as ~~only one~~ ^{only one} person spoke at a time and the general order and peace of the class was not upset too much. Then it was that the most valuable discoveries were made for possible "plays," and a good deal of the preparation done.

Frequently, too, while on an expedition or "Nature ramble" in the summer-time, we would be out of doors the whole morning. Then, when the

ordinary playtime arrived, we would arrange ourselves on the side of the downs or in a little copse, and go through a short History play—occasionally we would arrange a new and impromptu one. Sometimes these were very well arranged by the children—often they were better, from an educational standpoint, than plays to which more preparation had been given. At the time of the Quebec Pageant in memory of the gallant Wolfe, the boys arranged a most successful and thrilling “Wolfe on the heights of Abraham” in a disused chalk-pit, where they could scale the heights most realistically. And of course Charles II. and the Boscobel Oak episode could only be played to perfection out in a little wooded plantation. Scenes from their favourite “Ivanhoe” were the delight of their hearts on summer afternoons under the shade of the greenwood tree.

And here, by the by, as an example of how this kind of teaching was training them to a sense of the fitness of things (a splendid possession through life!), I ought to mention that the scholars soon began to quote from good authors quite appropriately and naturally. On the first occasion on which they tried scenes from “Ivanhoe,” out in the little wooded spot, they naturally connected their Locksley or Robin Hood and his bold outlaws with the greenwood tree, and needs must pose themselves like a band of “merry men” enjoying an evening rest while an unseen chorus

of girls behind the trees sang "Under the green-wood tree," to Dr. Arne's setting. A lovelier effect I never heard from the most practised of singers, the voices mellowed by the open air—young, fresh voices—and the birds in the trees overhead echoing and vieing with their song! After all, *why do we sing?* To please the sense of hearing, and a deeper, more æsthetic sense too. Then our children should learn to sing artistically and in the open air. And *does* the ordinary school singing please the senses? Does it not lack spontaneity? Then let your scholars use their singing for a purpose, and you will find they will realise what is required instinctively and supply the effect. I called this little tableau "dramatising" their singing. Some may question the effect on the listeners. What I saw was a group of silent, thoughtful-looking boys, resting in perfectly natural poses, sobered down in spite of their youth and boisterous, boyish spirits, to a quiet listening attitude. I have not the faintest doubt that theirs was perfect enjoyment, for the spell was not broken when the song ceased. I did not question them as to their sensations, nor ask if they enjoyed the music, nor what were their impressions of it. I doubt if they could have told me in so many words. But they have often, since then, asked to have the song again in school, and always the boys supplied the soft whistling of the birds as an accompaniment because the real birds were missing.

CHAPTER III

THE ADAPTED PLAY

AS an example of what I may call an "adapted" play, and more particularly one for girls as well as boys, I give the play on the reign of Elizabeth as it was partially adapted from "Kenilworth" and partly originated by individual scholars. It is copied from one of the girls' notebooks. The boys had fixed up the movable blackboard table as a tobacco stall; other stalls were arranged on the front desks, while the space in front was supposed to represent a street in old London—the chorus generally said Cheapside. All those taking part in the play were ranged at one end of the room which we called "off stage." Those left seated in the desks, and called "chorus," then described the scene as they imagined it to be—narrow streets, badly paved with cobble-stones, stalls with market women keeping them and calling their wares, and idle 'prentices.

Enter two Market Women with baskets of wares.

Apprentices cry, "What d'ye lack?"

FIRST MARKET WOMAN. Hast heard the news



[Photo by]

THE FIRST COUNCIL OF HENRY V.
(The Archbishop of Canterbury is speaking.)

Clarke & Hyde

that Philip hath sent a large fleet of ships to England against us?

SECOND M. W. Odds, woman ! thou dost surprise me.

FIRST M. W. There are hundreds and hundreds of them, and I did hear that a man named Drake and some of his friends were playing at bowls down at Plymouth Hoe, when another man came riding up to them and told them that the Spanish were in the Channel. The good Queen, God bless her ! went down to see the army, riding on her grey pony.

Enter Third Market Woman, while a Man draws near to listen, eating a large apple.

THIRD WOMAN. Do you know that the English are sending out fire-ships?

SECOND WOMAN. Lawk-a-mussey-me ! what are they?

THIRD WOMAN. Why, they are old vessels filled with tar, and gunpowder, and things that will burn easily. They turn these adrift among the enemy's ships and they either set fire to the other ships or blow them up.

SECOND WOMAN. They say the Spanish ships sail in a half-moon shape?

MAN *with apple*. Ah, it wants stout English hearts like mine to fight they Spaniards !

FIRST WOMAN. Methinks your stomach is greater than your heart.

SECOND WOMAN. Yes, judging by the size of his apple—but hark! here comes the Queen. We must be off to our stalls.

Enter QUEEN ELIZABETH, Court Ladies, and Courtiers.

MARKET WOMEN. What d'ye lack? What d'ye lack?

MARKET WOMAN (*curtsies*). Ribbons and lacés for sweet pretty faces, your Majesty!

COURT LADY. I will have a yard of sarcenet to deck my bodice for this evening's Morris dance.

MARKET WOMAN. Nice, fresh^o arum-roots to stiffen the ladies' ruffles, your Majesty!

QUEEN. Yes, my ruffles are exceedingly limp. I will have a pound sent to the palace?

MARKET WOMAN. Woundwort, to cure cuts and bruises, your Majesty!

COURT LADY. Oh, your Majesty, do you not remember that poor soldier who was wounded in a bout at quarter-staff last night?

QUEEN. Indeed, poor fellow! then see that he has some woundwort made into poultices and applied to his sore pate.

MARKET WOMAN. Stitchwort, to cure stitch in the side, your Majesty!

ANOTHER. Rosemary^o and thyme to scent the floors with, your Majesty!

COURT LADY. See, your Majesty, the new flower called wallflower, brought from America !

QUEEN. Methinks I should like to smell that sweet flower. (*Market Woman presents a bunch, which the QUEEN sniffs daintily. They pass along until they reach tobacco stall.*) See, my ladies, the new stuff called tobacco, brought from Virginia ! (*Courtiers stop and purchase cigars and awkwardly light them, the QUEEN meanwhile passes slightly on.*) Oh, this muddy pool—what shall we do, my ladies ? And my feet are so lightly shod ! (*WALTER RALEIGH steps forward and gracefully places the cloak which he has worn lightly on his shoulders over the muddy spot—remaining kneeling on one knee while the Ladies, headed by the QUEEN, pass over dryshod.*) Who is that young lack-cloak ?

COURT LADY. He is one Walter Raleigh, your Majesty, who sailed the oceans wide, and brought back the tobacco, and the batata, and the wallflower from Virginia.

SECOND COURT LADY. And called it Virginia after the Virgin Queen, your Majesty.

QUEEN. Well, bring him to the palace, and we shall maybe find him a post there. Now to the barge, my ladies. [*Exit all slowly.*]

The children next changed the scene to Kenil-

worth Castle, and borrowed the wording of their scene from Sir Walter Scott's "Kenilworth." The words of the preceding scene they obtained from various sources, and invented all they could not so obtain. It was characteristic of them that they worked in a little of their Nature Study when they alluded to "woundwort," "stitchwort," and "arum-roots." It is a fact that wild arum (cuckoo-pint) tubers contain starch, which was used for starching ruffs in Elizabeth's reign. The children discovered the starch by applying iodine and obtaining a purple-coloured reaction.

SCENE.—*Kenilworth Castle, described by Chorus as usual.*

Music—something stately—generally a gavotte. Courtiers and Ladies enter, a few at a time. The various groups greet one another with profound, courtly bows and the deepest of courtesies. Music grows louder and imitates fanfare of trumpets. Enter QUEEN. The Courtiers and Ladies fall back into two lines, and the QUEEN bows from side to side. Her Ladies accompany her, and pages carry her train. When the QUEEN is seated and all the Ladies and Gentlemen grouped the QUEEN speaks:

"Bring in that young lack-cloak." A Courtier answers, "Yes, your Majesty," and goes out bowing. His voice is then heard outside, saying, "The Queen requires you in her presence."

Enter RALEIGH. He kneels in front of the QUEEN.

QUEEN. You have, young man, spoilt a gay mantle in our service. We thank you for your courtesy, but your gallantry shall not go unrewarded. Go to the wardrobe-keeper and he shall supply you with a suit quite of the latest cut. (RALEIGH shakes his head and makes a sign as if he declined the QUEEN'S present.) How now, boy? What wouldst thou have of me—neither gold nor garment?

RALEIGH. Only permission, madam, to wear my own cloak.

QUEEN. To wear thine own muddy cloak, thou silly boy! Heard ye ever the likes, my lords?

RALEIGH. It is no longer my cloak, since your Majesty's foot hath trodden upon it.

QUEEN. Then we will reward you in our own way. Your sword, Essex. (The EARL kneels and hands his sword to the QUEEN, who strikes RALEIGH lightly over the shoulder with it.) Rise, Sir Walter Raleigh. (RALEIGH rises gracefully, while the other Courtiers show jealousy and look displeased.)

ESSEX. Will you knight *my* friend, Nicholas Blount, your Majesty?

QUEEN. Yes—bring him in. (BLOUNT *is fetched*.)
Your sword, Sussex! Rise, Sir Nicholas Blount!
(*He rises awkwardly and clutches at the QUEEN to save himself.*)

COURT LADY. Did you see how awkwardly he arose, your Majesty?

SECOND LADY. I heard his collar-bone rattle.

QUEEN (*laughing*). Yes, I did give him a smart tap. Now we will have a dance. (*They dance a stately measure.*) Now to the banquet—your arm, Essex,
[Exit all.]

CHAPTER IV

THE ORIGINAL PLAY

A SLIGHTLY different class of play I have termed the *original* play. In this case the scholars themselves collected all the material for the play out of History books proper, and did not in any way rely on works of fiction or the historical novel or story-book for their dialogues. Naturally, as they were acting History they had to get facts from some record, in the same way as an ordinary dramatist must do. Therefore they consulted the historians but not the writers of fiction. This kind of play was consequently more difficult to get in form than such a play as "Elizabeth," in which much of the dialogue was taken direct from books. One of the most successful of these "original" historical plays was that called "Charles I." For this the scholars chose six boys to be dressed as Puritans and represent sixty, ranged on forms in the usual front space, now called by the chorus Westminster Hall. Each boy wore a tall, stove-pipe hat (made by the girls of brown paper painted black with ink), to show he was a Puritan. As the class

agreed that these should be stern men, the sort of men to "stand no nonsense," each boy was always careful to wear a very sober, not to say stern, visage. The way in which they preserved their gravity was quite marvellous—in fact, they were so much "in the play," heart and soul, that they did not think of anything but the proper demeanour. Other characters chosen were a Bradshaw—the judge, in his famous black hat, which the girls also constructed, making it extra large to distinguish Bradshaw from the others; Cromwell, wearing a sword to distinguish him as the head of the Ironsides; Coke, the clerk of the court, wearing robes (sheets), and holding a scroll of paper (from which, by the way, he read his part to save learning it by heart at first); Charles I., wearing a curled wig which deserves a paragraph all to itself.

It was designed and made by one of the elder girls. She made the foundations by crocheting a skull cap of wool, and to this she sewed strands of frayed rope which looked like lovely glossy hair. When she reached this stage it was tried on a boy's head and given a "hair-cut" to make the ends even. Then the "hair" was carefully curled in papers and pressed, and after this it looked like a lovely curled Cavalier's wig.

Charles also wore a black velvet "picture" hat, given by a lady friend and worn very debonairly. We "corked" his moustache and



Photo by

HENRY V. EXECUTION OF TRAITORS.

(Clark & Hyde)

short beard. He wore a pair of the sateen knickers and a pair of the long stockings before alluded to, a sword, a graceful cloak (made out of a lady's skirt), buckled shoes, and carried a knobbed stick, which, as it had to do duty in the play, had the knob previously loosened, so that it would fall off easily. Other Cavaliers who accompanied him had also wigs, knickers, and swords. The "plumes" in their hats were novel, consisting merely of sprays of pampas-grass such as is used in vases for decorative purposes and which grows in many of the Sompting gardens. The girls were dressed in window curtains, with lovely trains, and carried fans (of pleated paper). Their hair and head-dresses they copied from pictures of the period and "did" one another's before school time. The boy who acted as Coke in the first scenes took the part of Bishop Juxon in the later scenes, because, as he was already draped in "robes," all he had to do was to don a mitre to show he was a bishop. The two young children of Charles, the Duke of Gloucester and little Princess Elizabeth, were dressed as nearly as possible like the pictures one sees of them—and were picked out as small as possible, so as not to make the "father" look ridiculous. Princess Elizabeth wore a close-fitting lace cap and had two tiny pages to walk behind her. The boys drew and painted a coat of arms to take the place of the Royal Arms of England, bearing the words "God

with us." This they pinned on the cupboard door, where Charles could not fail to see it on entry. For the King they placed the high desk chair so that he might be seen prominently. Two ushers of the court and a crowd of citizens and soldiers, as well as a headsman, were drilled into their parts, the latter wearing a black paper mask tied over his eyes and shouldering the headsman's axe before mentioned. The nearest approach to the tolling of a funeral bell which they could manage in school was produced by striking a spoon against the side of a basin, and this I was deputed to do.

The first scene was laid in Westminster Hall and represented the "first day's trial." The chorus always informed us that after the "first day's trial" we skipped over to the "seventh day's trial." Here is the play as copied from a scholar's notebook, with comments by myself.

SCENE I.—*Westminster Hall.*

Enter Gentlemen of the Court. When all are assembled, enter CROMWELL.

CROMWELL. Sirs, we have met here to-day to try a certain man named Charles Stuart, who has done much harm to this country. We have had enough of his tyrannies, his Star Chambers, and his illegal ways of getting money. This *must* be stopped. (Puritans: Yes, it must!) He has been taught by his father the Divine Right of Kings, and by the evil

influence of the Duke of Buckinghamshire, helped on by his wife, he has caused the blood of many thousands to be shed.

COKE. Yes, his evil influence has had a great effect.

CROMWELL. It must be stopped. We must cut these Stuarts out, root and branch.

Enter BRADSHAW. As we have met here to-day to try this man named Charles Stuart, go and fetch the prisoner.

[Ushers of the Court go out and re-enter, followed by KING CHARLES, accompanied by COLONEL HACKER and other Cavaliers.]

BRADSHAW. Clerk, read the charge.

COKE (*reads*). The charge stateth that, with limited power to govern according to law, you should use that power for the benefit of the people, their rights and liberties. But you have tried to take away the remedy for misgovernment, and in making war on the present Parliament you have caused the blood of many thousands to be shed. All this is against the public interest and common rights, liberty, justice, and peace of the people of this nation. You are a tyrant and a traitor!

CHARLES. Hold! hold! (*He touches COKE on the shoulder with his cane. The head of the cane drops off and rolls away. No one stirs to pick it up, although CHARLES looks round for them to do so. He picks it up himself.*)

BRADSHAW. Remove the prisoner. (CHARLES is removed, looking scornfully around.)

CHORUS. End of first day's trial.

SCENE II.—*Westminster Hall six days afterwards.*

Enter Gentlemen, Ushers, &c., as before. The Gentlemen talk in undertones and seem to discuss the trial very gravely. Enter CROMWELL.

CROMWELL. Have you agreed on your verdict, gentlemen?

JURYMAN. Yes, we have.

CROMWELL. What shall it be?

JURYMAN. Execution.

CROMWELL. There is no other way. It *must* be done.

JURYMAN. When it is done it cannot be undone, so decide carefully, gentlemen.

Enter BRADSHAW. Have you decided on your verdict, gentlemen? What shall it be?

JURYMEN. Execution! execution!

CROMWELL. Come, we will sign his death warrant. (*The warrant is signed, sealed, and stamped with the Great Seal of England. COKE holds it out to view.*)

COKE. Will this suit your wishes, gentlemen?

JURYMEN. Yes.

BRADSHAW. Go and fetch the prisoner.

[*On the way to the court the crowds (represented by*

the Chorus in desks, with a few standing to form two lines) mingle cries of "Justice! justice!" "Execution! execution!" One soldier steps forward as CHARLES passes and cries out, "God bless you, your Majesty!" The KING thanks him, but an officer strikes him with his cane.

CHARLES. Methinks that the punishment was greater than the offence. (*He turns to the Cavalier walking beside him.*) Did you hear that cry for justice?

CAVALIER. Yes, your Majesty, and I wondered at it.

CHARLES. So do not I. They will do anything their officer tells them, and they would say the same thing to their officers, if there were occasion, to-morrow. (*They enter the court.*)

CHARLES (*looking at the coat of arms*). God with us! Do you see that coat of arms?

COLONEL HACKER. Yes, it is the wrong one! (*CHARLES glances round the court, sits down, and then starts up again.*)

BRADSHAW. Clerk, read the sentence.

CHARLES. I refuse to be tried by this court! Where are the peers, who, by the laws of England, alone can try me?

BRADSHAW. *We* will try you! Clerk, read the sentence.

COKE (*reads*). The appointment and purpose of

this whole High Court which the King hath refused to acknowledge. The sentence which you are about to hear is the act and judgment of this High Court. The charge is proved upon you as the principal culprit, for all of which treasons and crimes this court doth adjudge that Charles Stuart is a traitor, murderer, and a liar——

Lady in the court—LADY FAIRFAX. It's a lie !

USHER. Who spoke there ?

LADY F. I spoke.

USHER. Silence in the court !

BRADSHAW. Proceed.

COKE. I repeat, is a tyrant, traitor, murderer, a liar, and a public enemy, and shall be put to death by severing his head from his body.

BRADSHAW. The sentence which you have heard is the act, sentence, judgment, and resolution of the whole court. Remove the prisoner.

KING CHARLES (*starting up*). But, sir, I may speak after the sentence.

BRADSHAW. Sir, you are not to be heard after the sentence.

CHARLES (*very agitated*). I may speak after the sentence ! Always, by your favour, sir ! I may speak after the sentence—by your favour——

BRADSHAW. Hold ! (CHARLES *is taken out of court, saying*, " They will not let me speak—they will not let me speak ! ")

SCENE III.—*A room in Whitehall*

CHARLES *is seated with* BISHOP JUXON, COLONEL HACKER, COLONEL TOMLINSON, *and* SIR THOMAS HERBERT *standing near*.

CHARLES. I should like to see my children.

BISHOP JUXON. Yes, your Majesty. (*He goes out. Re-enter BISHOP JUXON with PRINCESS ELIZABETH and young DUKE OF GLOUCESTER.*)

CHARLES. They are going to cut off thy father's head, my children.

BOTH CHILDREN. Oh, father—father!

DUKE OF GLOUCESTER. Do not let them cut off my father's head!

CHARLES. They will cut off thy brothers' heads if they catch them. Do not you ever be a king, my son, or they will cut off thy head also.

DUKE OF GLOUCESTER. I will be torn in pieces first.

CHARLES. Give my love to your mother.

CHILDREN. Yes, father.

CHARLES. Farewell, my children!

CHILDREN. Oh, father! father! (*They are led out, sobbing, by BISHOP JUXON. CHARLES falls on his knees, and the three others do the same. The bell tolls. They rise, and JUXON lays his hand on CHARLES'S shoulder.*)

BISHOP JUXON. You have only one stage more. It is troublesome, but short. It will carry you from earth to heaven. God bless you, your Majesty!

CHARLES. It will carry me from an earthly crown to a heavenly one. Farewell! (*To HERBERT*) Take my sword. (*To JUXON*) Take my watch. (*The bell tolls.*)

SCENE IV.—*Execution Scene.*

JUXON and HERBERT *fall on their knees and kiss the KING'S hands. The KING helps JUXON to rise.*

CHARLES. I am ready—we will go. (*They walk to the scaffold, where the axe is leaning against the block and the Executioner stands with folded arms.*)

CHARLES (*looking earnestly at the block*). That block is too low.

HACKER. No, your Majesty.

CHARLES. I suffer because I would not be ruled. It is a king's business to rule. You may not have a share in the Government. I declare I die a Protestant of the Church of England. Hurt not that axe (*some one had carelessly knocked it with their foot*)—that axe may presently hurt me!

[CHARLES takes the white cap from JUXON and the Executioner says, "Will you have your hair done up, your Majesty?" JUXON and the Chief Executioner push all his hair into the cap. The KING whispers last words into JUXON'S ear and takes off his cloak and orders. He then turns to the Executioner and says, "When I give the signal." He kneels at the block and prays, then stretches out his arms for a signal.

Just as the axe is about to descend he suddenly raises his head and waves the Executioner back. Then, turning to JUXON, he says, looking very meaningfully at him, "Remember!" He lowers his head, the axe descends, and he rolls over. All the crowd groan, and the Executioner, holding up the head (merely the cap and wig which he has cut off) cries, "This is the head of a traitor!" There are mingled cries of "Traitor!" and groans. A procession of ladies passes over the scaffold, weeping, and dipping their handkerchiefs in the blood of the KING, whom now they call the "Royal Martyr."]

The execution was always carried out with perfect solemnity, and the executioner was always very deft in managing to cut off the wig only while appearing to strike the head with all his force. "Charles," too, always managed as he rolled over to roll towards one particular boy, who threw a cloak over him to hide the fact that he still retained his head intact. There was, as usual, no trouble about apparatus. When a scaffold and block were needed the boys quickly turned the high desk chair down on to the floor, with cross-bar upwards and legs extended horizontally, and that formed both scaffold and block.

I could not help being struck by the manner in which the children had collaborated to bring out

the points of the History they desired to learn and teach—just those points which a teacher would probably note down as the things necessary to emphasise—and yet it was all done without effort. No doubt the reason was, that each actor had his eye particularly on his own part, and was so much in the part that he was quite well acquainted with all the “whys” and the “wherefores,” and with causes and their results. An ordinary class of children sitting still in desks, feeling themselves to be merely *a class* of children, might or might not be interested enough to inquire for reasons or results of actions. It is doubtful whether they would remember even what they heard except for a very short time. Teachers have constantly to devise plans for ensuring that children not only listen and pay attention but also remember what they hear. The truth is that we all remember what we actually *see* and *do* better than what we merely hear—perhaps force ourselves to hear or are forced to hear.

I wonder if people ever reflect on the enormous number of facts which are talked into children in Elementary Schools for probably seven whole consecutive years! How monotonous it must become, although the child may not realise that it is monotony! Why should it be considered so virtuous a thing for a class of children to sit still and listen, while a teacher (who is probably

often very tired of it) talks on every subject or adopts what I call the "stand-and-deliver" attitude, and demands from the children opinions which they have not, as yet, formed. The whole lecture, question-and-answer system appears to me now to be so dead—so utterly devoid of life. If we really want to obtain a child's opinions and to find out what he really knows (and consequently will remember) we should confront him with what he may be expected to be able to assimilate and throw the whole responsibility of assimilation on to himself—in other words, *it is useless to eat his food for him; he must eat it for himself*. To lecture a child on a certain subject and then to ask him one or two questions on it does not prove that the child has learnt, knows, or will remember anything about it. He may make a clever shot at the answer or he may be a little "parrot." And what a lot of useless lumber we may pack into a child's mind in seven years of "fact teaching." For instance, *on what practical value is it for a boy to know that Charles I. was executed and said certain words at his trial, the number of men who tried him, their names, and the dates when such things took place?* It may not be the facts themselves which are so valuable. It is the *habit of mind* formed while learning them which makes their worth. If a boy has to search out the facts for himself, for a pleasurable object, he will probably do it thoroughly; and while doing so he will exercise his ingenuity,

resourcefulness, self-reliance, and intelligence. If he does not exercise these powers it is certain, by the laws of nature, that they will become attenuated for want of use or be lost altogether. And I have heard frequent complaints from teachers that "So-and-so, who used to be so very bright in the infant school, seems to have lost all intelligence and is quite dull over the simplest things."

There have been rumours, too, in other quarters; that boys leaving school and beginning work are lacking in initiative and self-reliance—both "business" qualities needed by boys. There is only one way to develop self-reliance and initiative, and that is to exercise these powers. If boys are expected to show signs of possessing these qualities on leaving school, then the time to exercise and practise them is *in* school. There are not many ways in which such powers can be exercised while the scholars remain grouped in classes. It so often happens that individual work cannot be done in class. But I have found my Dramatic Method forced children to exercise these powers and automatically, as it were, develop them—and I give my experiences to the world at large for what they are worth.

A glance at the foregoing play will illustrate my remarks. The boy who represented Cromwell had to write his own speeches, and therefore on *him* was thrown the responsibility of finding out and putting together material. There was the first step

towards developing self-reliance—responsibility of the individual. Probably one book of reference failed him and he developed *perseverance*. All books failed him at some junctures and he had to display *ingenuity*. He had to work in an introduction to the play and its characters and describe the hero indirectly yet gracefully, and to be brief about it. Here came in *resourcefulness*. Glance at his first speech and see how he did all this without being talked into it or questioned out of it. He first explains why the Puritans are assembled. He introduces the hero by name. He gives the Puritan version of Charles's character, their reasons for dislike. He enumerates the crimes attributed to him or hints at them shortly. He finds reasons for Charles's weakness of character. "He has been taught by his father," &c., so he had evidently hunted up the reign of James I. to find causes. This is not only teaching composition, but, at the same time, inculcating important habits of mind. After all, of what use is it to teach a child to write a fair composition if the other habits of mind be missing or only survive in spite of circumstances? At the end of his speech he evidently conferred with "Coke," because the next long and explanatory speech is by the boy representing Coke. He realises his opportunity lies in enumerating in greater detail the faults of Charles; and "Cromwell" realised that he might properly be brief and leave detail to

"Coke." Here was forethought. And here were two schoolboys *analysing* history and men ! Is it not worth a trial, this method which has such results to show ?

After all, it did not need much resourcefulness, self-reliance, or initiative to reproduce a story which had been read aloud to the class twice, or to write a page of "composition" on a given subject, particularly when actual "headings" of the various sections of the composition were written on the blackboard for compulsory use ! I have read many pathetic attempts by poor children to oblige the autocrat who dictated these "headings," and I have heard of one poor little boy who used one set of "headings" for another essay and tried to write an essay on the "cat" using "orange" headings, with disastrous results ; for he wrote : "The skin of the cat is its fur" (that was under the heading "skin"). "Its flesh is the pulp. Its seeds I do not know." I do not think I ever found the children of Compting School writing about what they did not know, because a child generally knows a great deal of what he "plays" about ; and also because the scholars had formed a habit of freely discussing and "threshing out" difficulties with the community,—in the act of doing which they deepened the impressions made on their brains, making remembrance more easy.

It may have already occurred to the reader that one effect of the play—more particularly the original

play—on the scholars would necessarily be a great improvement in their speech and diction. They naturally learned to speak freely, to enunciate clearly, and to avoid mumbling or gabbling. They learned to choose their phrases carefully and to clothe their thoughts in appropriate words. To give an instance of what I mean ; one little girl was telling me that she had planted some seeds. She said, " I planted them in some dirt in a box." Another small child immediately said, " Don't say ' dirt,' say ' mould ' or ' earth.' " Young as she was, she had learned to differentiate between the polite term and the reverse. On another occasion, whilst on a Nature ramble with the elder scholars, I was picking my way over a very rough road full of old cart-ruts which had cut deeply into the chalk. We were walking single file to avoid the mud. I turned to the girl immediately behind me and said, " This is a nasty road." " ' Alas ! my journey, rugged and uneven,' " quoted she.

It was a great help to the children, in learning to speak correctly, that they might use appropriate and natural gesture, as was possible while acting a part. One remembers the " actions " taught in lessons set apart for " recitation " and " action songs." How little they expressed what the child itself felt ! And how impossible it was to show any real " expression " or feeling when reciting with the hands rigidly held behind the back !

It is true that the chorus of scholars who had no speaking parts had to sit in their desks during the performance of plays, but even they had no set form of words dictated to them. They were set to find words for themselves, and not a little of the work fell on them. A great measure of the success of a play depended on them. It is not possible or necessary to act the whole of any reign when playing History. The scholars ingeniously worked into their speeches as much explanation as could be included without being tedious. The rest they left to the chorus, who were constantly on the watch to "put in their oar" when some gap needed filling. For instance, in the play "Charles I." they always explained why the wife and two elder sons of Charles were not near him at his trial. Directly after the first scene, while the next scene was being prepared, they would depute one of themselves to be spokesman in such a case, "His wife had gone to the Continent to try and raise an army," or some words of that sort.

A glance round the school when a "play" was in progress would soon show that all the children there were equally animated, eager and interested—simply because we were using for educational purposes one of the strongest instincts of childhood—I might almost say of human nature. We were harnessing another "Niagara Falls."

CHAPTER V.

THE SHAKESPEAREAN PLAY

IT was only to be expected that, as soon as the scholars of Sompting school had tried to write their own historical plays (and hence knew the points of a good play), they should soon be on the watch for good ready-made plays illustrating the periods they happened to be studying. Naturally they found these in the works of Shakespear. And here, as with the poetry, songs, and music, so with Shakespear's works, they "discovered" them for themselves. It was not a case of the teacher telling the children to read so-and-so; but, on the contrary, it was the children who drew the teacher's attention to the fact that there were good plays which they could act in the volume of Shakespear's plays which they kept on their library shelf. It was the scholars themselves, too, by the way, who subscribed their halfpence and bought a nicely illustrated edition of Shakespear's works, which soon became one of the most used books in their library.

Of course, just at first they found the complete plays too lengthy for their purpose and the wording too difficult. Then, once more, their ingenuity came to their aid and they discovered how to abridge and adapt Shakespear to their own use. They began with "Henry V."

Their opening scene showed Henry as the hot-headed young prince with his boon companions bragging of the way he had defied Judge Gascoigne. His companions encouraged him, and he, in turn, promised them great honours when he should become king. Suddenly a messenger appears and tells him of the death of the King. He waves off his companions, saying, "Away with you all! I have no more to do with you." The boys liked the first scene tremendously, and "swaggered" beautifully as the riotous boon companions. They quite understood the spirit of the thing and introduced a bit of sword play and a quarrel, to which young Prince Hal put an end by striking up the swords of the combatants.

After this they followed the plan of Shakespear's "Henry V.," and made Scene II. of that play their first scene, and abridged the Archbishop of Canterbury's speeches sufficiently to allow an explanation of Henry's claim to the French throne and his views on the Salic Law. It was certainly interesting to watch how cleverly they got over the

difficulty of knowing nothing of the French language. They made the messenger from the Dauphin speak broken English ! The incident of the present of tennis-balls was included, and Henry was quite fine in his denunciation of the insult, and his determination to send the tennis-balls back as "cannon-balls."

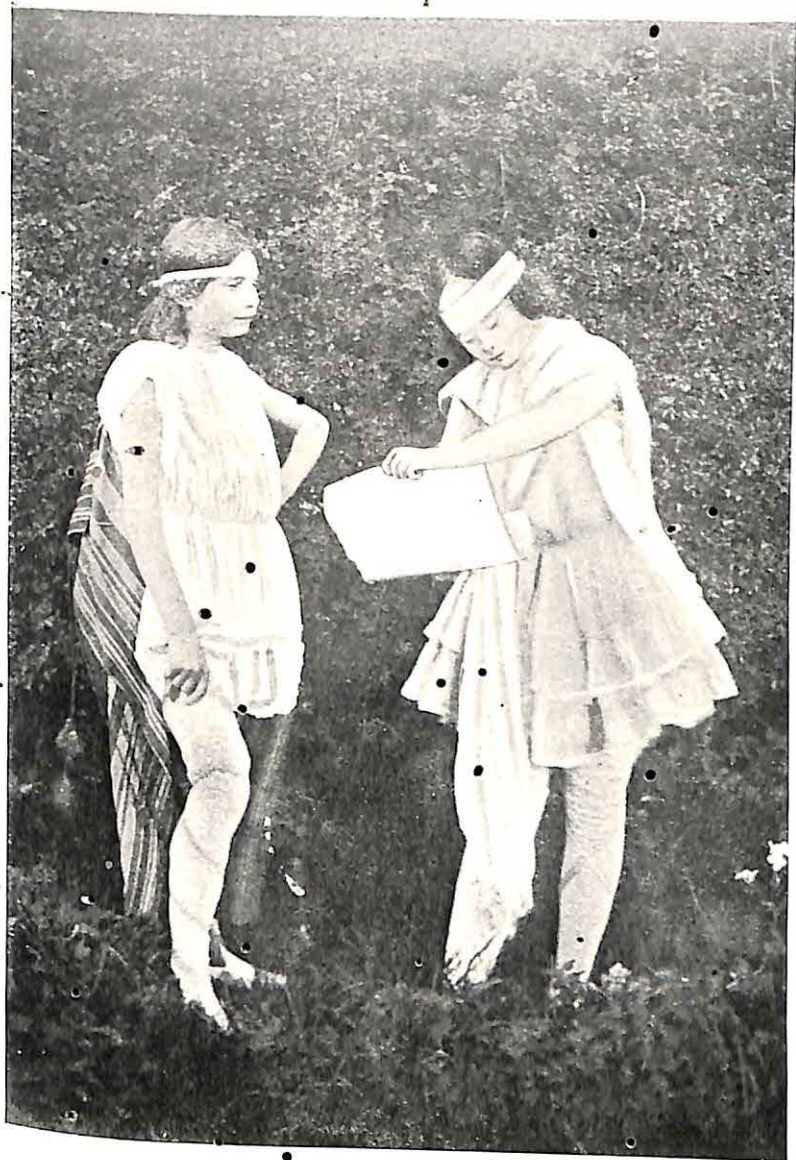
The chorus in this play next recited from memory the passage from the play beginning

"Now all the youth of England are on fire,
And silken dalliance in the wardrobe lies,"

whilst the King and others donned all the gorgeous armour they could muster. This in most cases consisted of string "chain mail" and silver tea-paper. Henry V. himself wore a shirt of fine mail consisting of a lady's silk vest ! Over the head-pieces of chain mail they wore helmets and the principals rode "steeds." They were generally dressed before the chorus had finished reciting and would then ride past the school window shaking their "lances" to show they were off to Southampton ! Next they fitted in a little scene showing Southampton, the guilty Lords Scroop, Cambridge, and Grey and their punishment by Henry. Mere writing cannot make my readers realise how well these little rural boys "lived" the parts. The dignity and restraint of Henry as he led up to the charge and sentence ; the guilty starts and

shamed demeanour of the culprits; the correct bearing of Exeter, as he says, "I arrest thee," &c.; the way in which the last arrested conspirator broke his sword before delivering it up were all realistic in the extreme, and certainly had their share in improving the tone and bearing of the boys. They went beyond Shakespear here and showed the execution of the three traitors.

It was in this play that we instituted the rule that when, in a battle scene, the bell was rung, every one should stand quite still in a sort of tableau. This was to ensure that there should be no accidents. I could stop the "fight" at will. The scene showing the siege of Harfleur was worked in this way. The walls were represented by chairs placed along the side of "stage" space. When Henry desired the moment of victory to arrive, he jumped upon one of the chairs, crying, "To the breach! To the breach!" I would then sound the bell and every one struck an attitude just where he was—some "dead," some engaging in combat—and tableau! The scenes in both camps before the Battle of Agincourt were well adapted. The girls always pulled down the blinds to show it was night and the chorus described the place, time, geographical position, numbers on each side, &c., and Henry recited the speech which answers Westmoreland when he wished for "one ten



GIRLS IN GREEK COSTUMES.

thousand of the men of England who do no work to-day." All the scholars used to get quite enthusiastic about St. Crispin's Day, and would often quote this passage from the Play.

Of course they had a beautiful tableau for the finish of Agincourt, with both French and English leaders included. After the battle "men" would steal in to rifle the dead soldiers, and again others would carry off the dead for burial. Then the boys suggested a voyage home with French prisoners, and cube sugar-boxes rigged as boats were brought into requisition. All the chorus mounted on the forms for a good view of the procession through London, and so real was it to them that I have heard little girls whisper excitedly, "Here they come! Here they come!" and almost fall off the form craning their necks and waving their handkerchiefs. It was easy to distinguish who were prisoners and who were victors. The former hung their heads and dragged their feet, whilst the latter held their heads erect and looked triumphant.

The "crowd" in this play, of soldiers, &c., were not drilled or trained to their parts in the orthodox way. In fact, they never acted the play twice alike, but just expressed themselves as they felt at the moment. Hence the play always went with a swing, spontaneously, and never mechanically. No true educational expert will need to be told that this

self-expression is the very thing we need most to aim at in order properly to exercise and train the children's faculties and get the best results.

That the children *were* set thinking for themselves by means of playing their own version of Shakespear's "Henry V." is proved by the fact that on the next "Unseen Reader" morning, following the first performance of "Henry V.," there was a great rush for historical works of all kinds, and very shortly we heard such remarks as "Why, it was my son, Henry VI., who caused Joan of Arc's death!" (from the boy who had impersonated Henry V.). "Yes, and when Jack died" ("Jack" was Henry V. for the nonce!) "Katharine married Owen Tudor, and that's where the Tudor line came from," said another. "How do you know that?" said I. "I traced it on this table," was the reply. I looked at the book shown me. It was opened at a genealogical table! Fancy that studied voluntarily by an ordinary boy!

Then a quiet, reserved boy—Ernest, otherwise Earl of Exeter—woke up from a brown study to say, "I have found a fine piece of poetry all about it." His book was "Ballads of English History," and he looked as though he were really and thoroughly delighted. What a great improvement on the highly-coloured and sensational literature which is devoured by young lads so constantly! I

quote this incident as showing that the Dramatic Method of teaching shows, or rather leads to, the *right way of using the text-book*, as a book of reference, voluntarily approached, rather than a book the contents of which have to be committed to memory in stated doses.

And if any one should wonder whether the scholars were really able to pursue any original investigations of their own from this play, I may mention that they found out without my telling them that Henry V. claimed the crown of France from his ancestor, Edward III., and all about the Salic Law. They themselves suggested that Henry VI. inherited his weakness of character from his maternal grandfather, the French King whom Shakespear painted as almost imbecile.

As time went on the children became more ambitious. They naturally desired to dive deeper into the works of a dramatist who could provide them with such keen enjoyment in playing the life of Henry V. And this is not the least significant part of the work. "*We needs must love the highest when we see it.*" We do not need telling that each one must find and see the highest for himself. How many a poor Elementary School child is doomed never to see it! If he leave school without having had a glimpse of it, however shadowy and distant, the chances are that he will never see

it. His may be a life of toil and his short leisure hours may be filled by the sensational "recreation" of the trick bicycle rider and other attractions of the variety theatre—good or harmless in themselves perhaps, but not sufficient to take the place of the pure pleasure and elevating benefit to be derived from real enjoyment of good literature. If we can give the child a taste for good literature while still a scholar in the Elementary School, we shall have opened the door by which he can, if he will, attain the highest. With a literature such as ours it is surely our duty to use such methods as will bring about this result.

And, I ask you, will a child who has once lived for a time in the romantic Forest of Arden with Touchstone, Rosalind, and Orlando ever need showing in what volume he may find a way of escape from a sordid world of toil and worldly gain? If he has ever taken a part in playing the delightful "A Midsummer Night's Dream," will he need to be at a loss where to find an evening's recreation? If you, dear reader, have ever found delight or profit or improvement in Shakespear's pages, you will know exactly how, by association of ideas, his plays haunt one's happiest hours.

The working-man of England need not necessarily—because he is a working-man—blow hideous noises and rowdy songs on a cornet and generally make an

exhibition of himself while on his annual "outing." I do not think it is too extravagant a dream to hope that one might see such things relegated to the limbo of the past. I know young enlightened working-men, who know their English literature well, who prefer to spend all their leisure time on their bicycles touring this England of ours, who see romance in the storied monuments of the past; who are *not* bored by an evening on the Sussex Downs alone or with a kindred spirit; who have the true artist's feeling for colour in beautiful landscapes; who do not merely regard a patch of bright yellow mustard as so much food for sheep, but as a touch of colour and contrast in the landscape; who know the names, abodes, and habits of all the flowers—rare or common—of their countryside; who know all the wonders of Roman remains or dew-ponds, and all the romance of the traces of our remote ancestors to be found on the Downs! And that, not merely from folk-legend and ignorance, but from the folk-legend plus an intelligent store of knowledge obtained by reading and reasoning. Surely there is hope for England when education of the right sort can turn out a working-man of this type. He will not be a less skilful or industrious worker because he is well read. A refined and intellectual worker is often looked upon as a rarity and even with suspicion. I

have hopes that the exact opposite may in time be our view, and that it will be the man who works only that he may have money to spend in the alehouse or on sensational enjoyments whom we shall call extraordinary. I have seen, in my own village, working-men—including farm and garden labourers—who could not only sit through an evening of Shakespearean plays, as spectators, with intelligent enjoyment, but who could, and did, themselves give a splendid rendering of Shakespear's "Julius Cæsar," to a description of which performance I hope to devote a short chapter in the latter part of this book.

That the scholars appreciated Shakespear out of school hours was clear, for fourteen of them chose volumes of Shakespear's plays for their school prizes. They further took the trouble to specify which plays they wanted included, and the favourites seemed to be "A Midsummer Night's Dream," "As You Like It," "Merchant of Venice," "King John," "Henry V.," "Julius Cæsar," and "Henry VI." These they afterwards carried backwards and forwards between home and school and made themselves well acquainted with the contents in the same way as they studied "Henry V."

Yet another pleasing result. The little girl who had first impersonated Rebecca in time left school for service. We might now reasonably suppose

that she was quite unfitted for the post of general servant in a clergyman's family by reason of her preparation of "play." But such was not the case. She remained in that, her first, situation for more than four years, and then her cause of leaving was the death of her master and consequent breaking-up of the household. The fact was, she was so cheerful and contented, so little apt to let circumstances get the better of her spirits, and she had such a store of bright reminiscences to occupy her mind whilst her hands were busy with mechanical tasks, that every one remarked what a contrast she was to the ordinary "girl-of-all-work." Moreover, her employers found her so well-informed, and so well able to impart to others what she knew, that they allowed her to assist the young daughters of the house with their home studies in the evening. She did this quite naturally—with neither false humility nor swelled head. She was evidently able to adapt herself to any circumstances. Her younger sister remained at the school, and when the class wanted to study "As You Like It," she bought really nice leather-bound "Temple" editions of this play and "A Midsummer Night's Dream," and gave them as a present to her younger sister, who, needless to say, used them well—not forgetting frequently to consult the notes at the ends of the books.

She is not merely an isolated case. All the little

girls who have gone out to service from the school have been of the same calibre. In some cases they met with mistresses who allowed them time in which to keep up their reading, and lent them the necessary and suitable books for this purpose. Could anything be more ideal?

The girls, in particular, were fond of the romantic plays of Shakespear, whilst the boys loved the more bustling historical plays. Their rendering of the scene between Hubert and Arthur in "King John" was quite different from any I have ever seen by schoolboys. If any reader would like to taste a similar experience to mine, let him set a few boys to prepare and act this scene as they imagine it really took place, after reading the play carefully. I always see the boys in my mind's eye when I read the words of the play. The two executioners draped themselves in window curtains (to look like "villains' cloaks") and wore black paper masks—pieces of paper, with holes cut for eyes, tied round their heads. They carried a pail of hot coals such as roadmen use at nights and had two pieces of sharp iron stuck therein. The hot coals and red-hot irons were simulated with red chalk! The boy who impersonated Hubert was, I feel sure, a born artist. Instead of reciting his lines as if he were reading them straight off, he "thought" them, and showed his thoughts in gesture and facial ex-

pression. The result was that all his young audience understood the struggle going on in Hubert's mind and were consequently interested, as children will be by anything which bears the stamp of truth—is "real true." The young Arthur of the piece, taking his cue from Hubert, showed how the real Arthur must have gained and followed up the advantages of his eloquent and touching appeals—so much so that the audience was carried away. Likewise the two executioners, one of whom really meant what he said when he ejaculated, "I am well pleased to be away from such a deed." The charm of the children's presentment of these plays of Shakespear lay in their original treatment and interpretation of them, their novel "properties" and gesture.

This brings me to mention another point—the fact that naturally the plays in school brought forth an accompanying *handicraft* and *art* of their own. Following the earlier plays, I frequently found the elder boys drawing in their books the scenes which they had enacted; and this led to my giving them time and opportunity to depict what they saw or imagined while acting or looking on. The curious part of the resulting drawings was the fact that the drawing showed costume and scenery as it ought to be and not as seen in the make-believe plays. For instance, in the tournament scene

taken from "Ivanhoe," the boy who drew the picture had most correctly imagined the Lists of Ashby-de-la-Zouche, because, to him, the school desks and cupboards had not existed in the play. He had drawn heroes in armour instead of his small schoolfellows in corduroy.

In addition to drawing, both boys and girls took a great interest in making the various articles needed in their plays, and I fancy this brought forth their ingenuity more, and had a better educational value, than set formal lessons on handicrafts—that is, for Elementary School children. It set them experimenting at any rate, and by it they found out their own weakness of method and technical ignorances. It seemed, indeed, as if dramatising lessons touched some human interest which *would* express itself in every possible form of art.

Another point which developed itself more particularly in connection with the Shakespearean plays, in which the children spoke the lines verbatim, was the fact that small scholars of the chorus would arm themselves with a copy of the play in progress, and constitute themselves as "prompters." I have seen as many as fourteen books being closely scanned by twice as many heads of little Third Standard children, and I have then thought: "What a splendidly attentive reading class!"

What is more, I am sure they were all attentive, because, did the performers miss one single word, every child who had a book would supply the needful correction at once.

One of the most suitable and successful Shakespearean scenes for the boys was "King Henry VI.," Part II., Act IV., Scene II. The boys also attempted Scenes III. and IV. and Scene X. Having thus exemplified the rebellion of Jack Cade, it was natural that they should read the context around it and then dovetail what they had learned thus with what they had played of "Henry V." So that the Shakespearean play was not only valuable as a lesson on literature, but correlated many useful branches of knowledge.

There was something eminently suitable in these scenes of Jack Cade's rebellion for these rural scholars with their Sussex accent, and they knew instinctively how the rabble would be likely to bear themselves—cringing before Cade's face and slyly smiling behind his back. They entered quite wholeheartedly into the little scene in which the clerk of Chatham who "could write and read and cast accompt," is haled before Cade for judgment, and they knew and appreciated exactly how it was a skit of Shakespear's on the ignorance of the times. I think the very fact that they once played such a skit would deter them from opposing progress

through ignorance and prejudice. Yet I have heard one of the scholars' fathers brag that he opposed some parish matter which was being discussed by a committee of which he was a member, though he did not understand the matter nor could he tell why he opposed it. He merely thought it a fine thing to say.

The boys liked this play so well that they modelled one of their own on it and played Wat Tyler's rebellion on similar lines. They commenced their play by causing two gentlemen to meet and discuss the rising in France.

One of the Gentlemen (whom they named Squire Balderdash!) says: I have just heard, by a mounted messenger from Dover, that the English peasants are rising too, and are discontented with the taxes they have to pay.

SECOND GENTLEMAN. The King must be informed of this.

FIRST GENTLEMAN. But the King will not listen. He is young and hot-headed; besides, money must be raised to pay for the war with France. The peasants are headed by a man named Walter Tyler, of Essex, and they are marching to London. (*Noise of rabble heard approaching. A crowd gathers round a man, who begins to address them—*

"When Adam delved and Eve span,
Who was then the gentleman?"



PUCK.

SECOND GENTLEMAN. Come! I to
you to the Lord Mayor! Something must be
to prepare London. [Exit both]

The preacher, whom you will recognise as John Ball, continues (and let me beg your lenience, kind and learned readers, towards the faults in the speech compiled by a small rural schoolboy!): Brethren, I have come to explain to you the question of these illegal taxes. How can you pay them without money? (A Voice: "We wants better wages.") Why should you poor people be oppressed, because money is needed to pay for wars? (Another Voice: "Those who make wars should pay for 'em—we wants trade improved. We wants permission to buy and sell in the markets!") And if you are bound to pay taxes, why shouldn't you be free men and no longer serfs? (A Voice: "Ycs, that's it! We wants land to till; land at 4d. an acre.")

SCENE II.—*Dartford, Kent.*

Men found working with hoes in the field. A realistic blacksmith's shop is arranged with a "desk" anvil at one end. The clanging of the sledge-hammers is simulated by striking an ordinary hammer on an old garden fork laid on the anvil. One corner is set apart for WAT TYLER'S house in which his daughter

sits working. A bell is heard ringing and two men enter calling out, "Oyez ! Oyez ! " They go to each of the men to collect the poll-tax, and they carry a book in which they have entered the names of all persons above the age of fifteen years. They demand three groats from every one of these. The men all murmur and refer the collectors to WAT TYLER, their champion. They call at the house of WAT, who declares he has no one above the age for payment. His daughter appears, and one of the collectors, jeering, says, " You have one, for she is over fifteen." WAT TYLER, enraged, strikes him with his smith's hammer. He falls dead. The other collector escapes. The men rally round WAT, throw the body down a well (this is a brisk piece of acting), and with much shouting determine to march to London. They decide on the terms they mean to demand: Slavery abolished; no tolls and taxes on trade; land at 4d. per acre; better housing; no illegal taxation.

Feeling that the schoolroom space was all too cramped for a march to freedom, the boys elected to march round the playground between the scenes and arrive in London in style. This they used to do, and frequently they introduced funny

little interludes, as, for instance, meeting with a lawyer.

WAT TYLER. Ho, there ! Stand ! Who are you, sirrah ?

LAWYER. I am a lawyer.

TYLER. Can you write ?

LAWYER. Indeed, I can write a court hand.

MOB. He has been writing these heavy taxes on the poor. Away with him ! *(He is dragged off and enter another man.)*

TYLER. Come, sirrah, join our ranks. We march to freedom.

MAN. I am sorry, sir, I am not fit for so grand an army ; besides, my wife and family need me at home.

TYLER. Can you read or write ?

MAN. No, sir, and I am sorry for it.

TYLER. Do not be sorry. You are just the man for us. Fall in with us. *(The man is pushed into a place and they march on.)*

SCENE III.

They arrive in London and the scene opens after they have taken London Bridge. WAT

TYLER holds a conversation with his chief officer. *(Notice here how ingeniously the young playwrights make the characters tell the story in the natural course of the play. They have,*

no doubt, "caught" that unawares from Shakespear's plays.)

WAT TYLER. Well, what news? Did you burn the old Duke of Lancaster's palace, the Savoy?

OFFICER. Ay, marry, that did we; and right well he deserved it, spending the good money and coming home from France without accomplishing anything. We have lost all but losing everything. Well, I have set and set

ee the prisoners. My good boys, I have led every Fleming they could find, whether in church, house, or hospital. None have escaped.

Whom shall we send as messenger to the King?

OFFICER. We have here a schoolmaster who hath repented him of his learning. Shall we send him?

WAT TYLER. Bring him to me. Now, sirrah, hearken. You are to go to the King in the Tower and say: "Your Majesty, Wat Tyler hath business with ye, and requires to see ye!" Mind your manners, as becometh a messenger from a great man.

[Schoolmaster bows low and departs. At the extreme end of schoolroom he enters the Tower gates (a gap between two forms), and is stopped by two warders and asked his business. He makes low bows and persuades them to let him enter. But he has no sooner com-

no doubt, "caught" that unawares from Shakespear's plays.)

WAT TYLER. Well, what news? Did you burn the old Duke of Lancaster's palace, the Savoy?

OFFICER. Ay, marry, that did we; and right well he deserved it, spending the good money and coming home from France without accomplishing anything, but losing everything. We have lost all save Calais!

WAT TYLER. Yes, indeed! Well, I have set fire to the King's prison—the Marshalsea—and set free the prisoners. My good boys of Kent have killed every Fleming they could find, whether in church, house, or hospital. None have escaped. Now whom shall we send as messenger to the King?

OFFICER. We have here a schoolmaster who hath repented him of his learning. Shall we send him?

WAT TYLER. Bring him to me. Now, sirrah, hearken. You are to go to the King in the Tower and say: "Your Majesty, Wat Tyler hath business with ye, and requires to see ye!" Mind your manners, as becometh a messenger from a great man.

[Schoolmaster bows low and departs. At the extreme end of schoolroom he enters the Tower gates (a gap between two forms), and is stopped by two warders and asked his business. He makes low bows and persuades them to let him enter. But he has no sooner com-



DEATH OF NELSON.
(With the famous signal in the background.)

menced his message than the young King, Richard II., looking half-amused, half-angry, says: "Who admitted this man? Be off, rough rebel!" The messenger returns and reports this to WAT TYLER, who is enraged and says: "Go back and tell him we desire to speak with him peaceably, but if he will not meet us we shall send him messages of fire and plunder!" The messenger once more gets past the warders, and, on his delivering his message, with many awkward bows, the KING confers with his Knights and Courtiers. They advise him to seem to agree with WAT TYLER and his followers, and he promises to meet the insurgents on the following morning.]

SCENE IV.

The next scene showed the mob under WAT TYLER arriving from the playground to meet the young KING, who, however, merely comes in a barge (inverted "form") down the River Thames to speak with them from that point of vantage. The mob rush forward and attempt to reach the boat with map-poles for boat-hooks. There are confused shouts of "We want no illegal taxes!" &c., and WAT TYLER raises the cry of "Treason!" Again WAT TYLER sends a messenger and the KING promises to meet them in a field at Mile End.

SCENE V.—*Mile End.*

The mob drawn up under WAT TYLER at one end of schoolroom. The KING and his followers, mounted, at the other. (This gave an opportunity for using the horse brasses, mentioned earlier in this volume, on the KING'S prancing "steed.") The KING rides forward and says: "I am your King and Lord, good people, what will you?"

WAT TYLER. Your Majesty, we will that you free us and our lands for ever; that you give us leave to buy and sell in the market-places; that land shall be 4d. an acre; and that no illegal taxes be levied."

MOB. Yes, yes! We want better houses. We will not be serfs any more.

KING RICHARD. I grant it. Go home quietly to your houses, and I will have the Charter written out and sealed.

MOB. Hurrah! Long live Richard II.!

WAT TYLER. Half of you disperse to your homes. The other twenty thousand remain here with me. Captains, see to it!

SCENE VI.—*Smithfield.*

WAT TYLER, mounted, talks in undertones with his captains. Suddenly the KING and his followers ride in. WAT TYLER rides forward

to meet him and taking hold of his horse's bridle, says: "You have broken your promise! Where is the Charter you swore to send us?"

WILLIAM WALWORTH, Mayor of London, rides forward, and, drawing his dagger (the wooden dagger covered with silver paper in cardboard sheath mentioned before in this book), says:

"Take your hand from the KING'S rein, vile peasant." TYLER struggles to retain his hold of the rein. The "horses" prance about.

WALWORTH strikes TYLER with the dagger.

He falls, groans, and dies. The peasants rush forward and one shouts: "They have slain

our leader! Kill! kill!" RICHARD faces round and calls out loudly: "What need ye,

my masters? I am your Captain and your King! Follow me! I will be your leader!"

He rides towards the door, facing round and waving his sword boldly. The mob appear to waver for an instant, then follow him, cheering.

The boys always finished the play by allowing "Richard" to ride right out and round the playground, while they marched after him, cheering.

I think the reader will at once see clearly how Shakespear's play and his version of Jack Cade's rebellion had influenced the young playwrights in their compilation of "Wat Tyler's rebellion." They dragged in a "Lawyer" who could write a "court hand," where Shakespear had introduced a school-

master. They certainly had tried to talk in the correct style of the times. For the facts and "plot" they read John Richard Green's "Readings from English History" and Froissart's account of the events. The whole of the preparation and arrangement was their own, the bulk of the work falling on "Wat Tyler" himself, who also impersonated "Squire Balderdash", in Scene I.; and his chief officer, who was also "John Ball," in the same scene. The chorus, of course, informed us that the young King was only sixteen years of age, and after the play told all about the results of the rising.

I can assure the reader that, under this most graphic kind of teaching, historical characters like those of Richard II. and Wat Tyler are no longer vague, unreal figures with curious names, tiresome acts, and elusive dates. Certainly not only are they real (and children love the concrete, we know!) but it is impossible that any scholar should be dull or that his brain should be inactive during such a lesson.

The next Shakespearean play which they attempted was the "Merchant of Venice," beginning with the trial scene and including also Scene II., Act IV. And here I would draw the reader's attention to the fact that there are a great many difficult lines, especially for Portia, to be committed to memory. There are, in fact, as many lines as used to be demanded of "certificate"



GLORIFIED RECITATIONS—"DAFFODILS."



TRIAL SCENE, "MERCHANT OF VENICE."
(Shylock and Portia in the foreground.)

students when they had a full year in which to prepare them. These small rural scholars made no trouble of learning them *in a few days*, and after that never needed prompting. Not that they were what is termed "sharp at learning"—they were learning almost involuntarily, because they were "living in the part" as it were. And that they did not shirk learning is proved by the fact that, of his own accord, Shylock in the play asked to be allowed to act Scene III.; Act I., in spite of the great number of lines and awkwardly turned phrases it contained.

Their impersonation of the various parts, far from being calculated to draw a smile (which might be expected when young children attempted to act complex characters), were earnest and interesting. Shylock and Portia, on whom so much of the success of the play depended, realised their parts wonderfully, and yet they were played in an original manner, because the action and gesture were their own, and neither taught by an instructor nor copied from players seen previously. They had merely the text of Shakespear to depend upon. That they read this aright was proved by the fact that in such speeches as Shylock's, commencing "How like a fawning publican he looks!" the boy impersonator used a venomous kind of undertone; and when Bassanio enters next and Shylock has to say, "I am debating of my present store," &c, the boy

changed his tone at once to a conciliatory, cringing tone, although no such directions are given in the play.

This play had, of course, no historical connection to teach, nor had "A Midsummer Night's



SHYLOCK.

Dream," nor "As You Like It," so we treated them as literature, under the general title of "English," dramatised.

The children's playing had reached quite a finished standard by the time they attempted scenes

from "A Midsummer Night's Dream." Their best scenes proved to be those of Act V., which depict "rude mechanicals" in a Greek play. The school children seemed to grasp, at first reading, all Shakespear's subtle burlesques, and were quickly all agog to "dress" the piece properly. They gathered a huge quantity of ivy and wreathed the room, making archways of thin laths nailed together—here the "natural" handicraft once more made itself evident—and fastening ivy and boughs of greenery on to that foundation. Ingenuity showed itself when coloured ribbons—"gold"—were needed to bind the stockings like sandals. The girls actually painted white tape with the yellow water colour from off their painting palettes. This when dry answered their purposes beautifully. Afterwards, when they needed coloured "ribbon" to sell by the yard when playing at arithmetic, each girl painted a piece of white tape a different colour. Greek tunics they made of old cotton skirts, gathering the waistband up for a neckband and cutting a hole at each side for the arms. These, when decorated with "key pattern" borders of gold paper (ironed on as described before) and accompanied by long white stockings, bound like sandals, and "gold" tape fillets around the head, gave quite a picturesque and Greek appearance to the prosaic schoolroom. The girls with long hair turned it up all round to add to the effect.

And all this was their own initiative, and their "English" lesson was seasoned with the same fresh enthusiasm as their history lessons—with how little trouble on the part of either teacher or child ! Certainly it gave no more trouble or exertion in preparation than an ordinary game ; yet at the end what a splendid harvest of lasting results in the wider outlook, the closer study of humanity, the enriched and strengthened memory, the greater knowledge of the beauties of our language (caught instinctively from contact with the mind of a past master in the art of appropriate clothing of expression, and all this lasting treasure absorbed from and through a game in school ! I doubt if by



GREEK COSTUME.

any other means *children of the labouring class in a village* could have learned to appreciate the beauties of speech such as the alliteration contained in the following lines :—"The tipsy Bacchanals tearing the Thracian singer." . . . "The thrice three muses mourning for the death of learning," and "Whereat with blade, with bloody blameful blade,

he bravely broached his boiling bloody breast." These lines, which occur in "Midsummer Night's Dream," were declaimed in a manner which brought out all their word-painting; and shortly after the play had been shown by the children to their



PROLOGUE IN "A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM."

(Declaiming her lines with dramatic force.)

schoolfellows the elder scholars essayed to write some poetry of their own, in which we found such lines as this occurring: "Sing, a song of sunshine that will suit this summer's day"—an example of alliteration which also suggested summer breezes.

Again in the same poem we had : " And the leaves will fan you gently as they rustle in the breeze."

I do not think it a light thing that children should be made to understand grace of expression and a little of the way to use their own language—to avoid being tedious through using the same words over and over again from a scanty vocabulary. Only a very short time ago a member of the London County Council Education Committee was reported to have said that if a certain circular had been written in wording reminiscent of the language of Milton, it would not have been understood by the people for whom it was intended. Another member described the circular as "bad grammar and bad form." A lady defended it by stating that the composition was partly her own, and that its style had been adopted as "being more likely to interest the people." If such conditions do prevail amongst the masses, then it is high time that Shakespear and his English became "familiar in their mouths as household words." Surely the best grammar or composition lesson must be long draughts from the well of pure English to be found in our standard authors. Somehow we have always more or less vaguely felt this, and have tried bringing our horses to the well—but they didn't always drink, and seldom deeply.

I wonder whether we grown-ups would ever have been so fond of Shakespear's plays if we had merely

read them, especially if we were ordered to read them! Do we not remember how and when our real, lively interest was awakened? In how many cases was it the illuminating acting and impressive delivery of some great Shakespearean actor that made our first interest awaken? Perhaps afterwards we read the play over again quietly and by association of ideas felt the same pleasurable sensations. Perhaps, also, it will not be a national waste of time if our masses learn to love Shakespear "in the days of their youth" by such means as I have described earlier in the chapter. It means to the masses exactly what it means to the classes—an enriched vocabulary, a better-stocked mind, a more fertile imagination. For the days when people talked in the language of Shakespear and his compæers, and consequently *thought* in that language, were the days of vivid imagination, initiative, and adventure. Our empire was extended by discovery; our trade improved by intelligence; our inventions kept pace with the demands of more luxury, which was the outcome of refinement of thought—refined, that is, in comparison with pre-Elizabethan times.

It may sound a sweeping statement; but is it not true that, in spite of at least more than twenty years of compulsory teaching of English, written and oral, the average youth confines himself to the latest catchword to express everything? A short

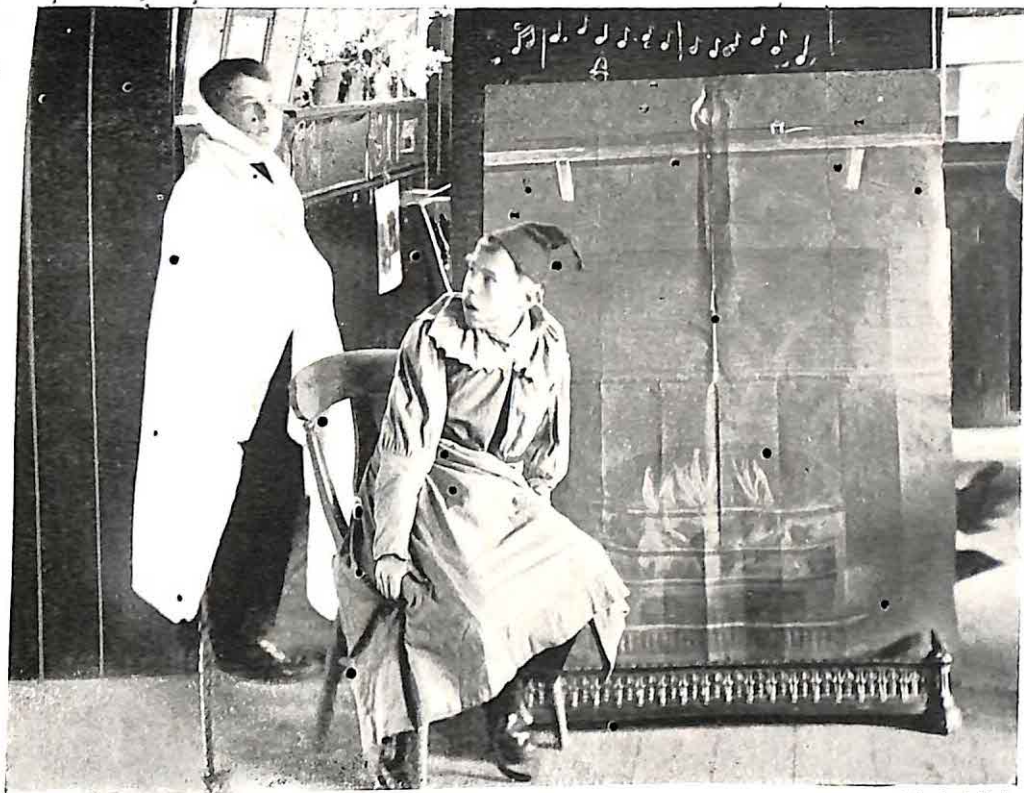


Photo by

THE GHOST OF MARLEY APPEARS TO SCROOGE

W. Clarke & Hyde.

while ago it seemed as if quite *one half* a lad's vocabulary was "not 'arf." And one can understand his intelligence becoming more and more dulled if he constantly thought as well as exclaimed to each and every remark "I don't fink." One feels one cannot forgive an Englishman for neglecting the beauties of his own language—a language in which almost every word tells a history; in which is written a literature unrivalled in the world. And the only way to revive the use of correct English is to allow children in school to speak and read it almost constantly. My own experience is, that allowing them to act a part *saves* them from feeling conscious of speaking or reading as a *lesson*, and causes them to use the words with a sense of their æsthetic beauty.

My scholars involuntarily bore me out in this opinion, for they asked whether they might read a play; and, taking the various parts, chose for their first effort "As You Like It." They liked it so well that for quite a number of weeks it was always asked for on Friday afternoons, which afternoon we always set apart for sports or any subject that seemed to please the general opinion. The Celia and Rosalind of the piece were two great friends, and, as most of the actors had copies of the piece of their own, it was evident that they studied their parts together at home during the evenings. They all soon became quite expert at reading and acting

at the same time, and I feel sure it improved their reading immensely to do this. We very seldom heard a word mispronounced. On the contrary, we heard great improvement in tone of voice, inflection, and modulation.

It may sound incredible, but I am certain that even the young scholars of Standard III. enjoyed and appreciated the play when they saw it enacted by their schoolfellows. Of course the actors put their own original little stamps upon it. Once more they improvised costumes, using their fingers with much ingenuity. Audrey was attired in an old ragged "window-curtain" skirt, with her brother's boots, many sizes too big, until on one joyful day a small boy proudly marched into school bearing a pair of real wooden shoes, in which Audrey clumped about to her heart's content. Orlando, not to be behindhand, used to hang his verses on the school palm which was always placed in the centre of the "stage" to represent the Forest of Arden. Touchstone wore a red flannel cap and bells, home-made of course, and Corin had a real shepherd's crook, borrowed from his father.

By this time the reader will have realised that I did not set out to teach stage-craft, but that my aim was rather to set this in the background; yet our child Rosalind, our Celia, and our Puck were so exceedingly good, dramatic, and convincing in their parts that their performance really approached

pure Art. A great Shakespearean actor and actress who saw them waxed quite enthusiastic over their natural way of deporting themselves and compared it with the "trained trickery" of many actors who are taught to "raise the hand here, walk so many strides there, lower the voice so, speak more slowly," and so forth.

After all, "all the world's a stage." What were all our heroes of history but men who held the centre of the world's stage for a time, and so acted their daily parts that they made a success of their play? What is our own every-day demeanour but the part which we play to express ourselves, or the reverse, according as our humour dictates? So that, left to themselves, our small scholars had only to imagine themselves the characters they represented and they immediately comported themselves as they fancied those characters would act in the circumstances shown in the play. It seems to me quite natural for every one to act and not only the gifted few.

I have mentioned the arches of greenery used for "A Midsummer Night's Dream." These were used again for the Forest of Arden when the play was carried out in school. But whenever possible we had the play in the open air, on the Downs or under the trees in the playground.

CHAPTER VI

A GIRLS' PLAY

THE girls were so pleased with their own successful readings of "As You Like It," that they determined to write a play, as the boys had done, entirely by themselves, each character making her own speeches from whatever authority she could collect material. They chose scenes from the closing part of the life of Mary, Queen of Scots, and I will copy one of the girls' manuscripts exactly as it was made.

EXECUTION OF MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS

SCENE I.

Enter MARY and Ladies in Waiting. The QUEEN seats herself at a table and the Ladies sit grouped at needlework. A knock is heard.

QUEEN MARY. Go and see who that is knocking at the door.

ELIZABETH, Lady in Waiting. Yes, your Majesty.



THE "TIG" SHED IN COURSE OF CONSTRUCTION.

(A real boys' game.)

(*She goes to the door and talks in an undertone to some one outside, then returns and says*): It is Lord Shrewsbury, and he requires to see you, your Majesty.

QUEEN MARY. Tell him I cannot see him just at present.

ELIZABETH (*goes back to door and says to messenger*). My lady says she cannot see you just at present.

SHREWSBURY. But tell her my business is very important, and therefore I *must* see her.

ELIZABETH (*returning*). Madam, he says his business is very important, so therefore he must see you.

QUEEN MARY (*after musing for a while*). Well, then, tell him I will see him.

Enter SHREWSBURY, who says: I am very sorry to tell you, Madam, that you are condemned to death. To-morrow at eight o'clock you are to die. Therefore prepare yourself, Madam.

The QUEEN, *half-fainting*, says to the Ladies who run and support her: What does he say?

SHREWSBURY *sadly repeats his message*.

QUEEN MARY. Can it be true that the Queen of England has consented to my death?

SHREWSBURY. It is true, Madam. (*He shows the warrant.*) See, there is her signature!

QUEEN MARY. I solemnly protest, with my hand

on this Testament (*laying her hand on volume on the table*), that I have never done anything that could prejudice the welfare of the kingdom.

[*Exit SHREWSBURY after bowing low.*

QUEEN MARY (*rising*). Come, my ladies, supper—the last, alas!—awaits us. Do not weep for me!

JEAN, Lady in Waiting. Oh, my lady, we would do anything if only we could see you happy.

[*Exit QUEEN slowly; the Ladies follow her, weeping silently.*

SCENE II.

QUEEN *seated at a table.* Ladies *as before.*

QUEEN. Go and fetch me my handkerchiefs.

ELIZABETH. Yes, your Majesty. (*She brings them in a box. The QUEEN turns them over and at last, holding one up, says*): I will have this one with the gold border to bandage my eyes on the scaffold to-morrow. (*Ladies sob aloud.*)

QUEEN MARY (*pointing to each one of her Ladies in turn as they sit around her*). To you, Jean, I leave all my rings; to you, Elizabeth, my jewels; to you my dresses; to you my ponies; and to you my money. Ask Bourgoin, my physician, to attend and read my will. (*Enter BOURGOIN with the will. He reads*): I here bequeath all my jewels, dresses, rings, ponies, money, and other things to

my Ladies in Waiting. (*He turns to the QUEEN and says*): Will you sign it, Madam? (*The QUEEN dips a quill pen in the ink and after pausing a moment signs it. The Ladies all cover their eyes with their handkerchiefs.*)

BOURGOIN. You will need two witnesses, Madam.

QUEEN. Elizabeth and Jean, you will sign this, please. (*Both Ladies come up weeping and sign it. JEAN falls on her knees in front of the QUEEN and says*): Oh, Madam, we would willingly give up all this if only we could see you happy once more. [*Exit BOURGOIN after bowing. The QUEEN then rises and goes off, her Ladies following her.*

SCENE III.

QUEEN MARY, *kneeling as if in prayer. A knocking is heard at the door and a bell strikes 8 o'clock.*

QUEEN. Tell those intruders to wait a few minutes.

JEAN. Yes, Madam. (*The Sheriff, bearing a white wand, pushes past her, and enters.*)

SHERIFF. Madam, the lords await you, and have sent me to you. Are you ready?

QUEEN. Yes, quite ready. Let us go.

[*She rises from her knees. BOURGOIN hands her an ivory crucifix. She kisses it and says*: "Carry

that before me." *She walks with difficulty, so two of her Ladies support her. At the end of the room she is met by the EARLS OF SHREWSBURY and KENT. The EARL OF SHREWSBURY orders the Ladies in Waiting to "Stand back !"* *They refuse. JEAN exclaims: "No, never !"* *They cling to her dress and finally fall on their knees. When they have succeeded in removing the Ladies, the QUEEN walks on a few steps, with dignity. She then meets ANDREW MELVIL, her trusty servant. He falls on his knees, weeping.]*

MARY. Thank you, good Melvil, for your constant fidelity. Tell my son all that you know and all that you are about to witness.

MELVIL. It will be the most sorrowful message I ever carried, to announce to the world that my sovereign and dear mistress is dead.

QUEEN. Thou shouldst rather rejoice, good Melvil, that Mary Stuart has arrived at the close of her misfortunes. Bear these tidings, that I die firm in my religion, a true Catholic, a true Scotchwoman, a true Frenchwoman. Thou knowest that this world is only vanity, and full of troubles and misery. May God forgive those who have sought my death. The Judge of the secret thoughts and actions of men knows that I have always desired the union of Scotland and England. Com-



GEOGRAPHY GAME. "COAL AND IRON TOWNS."

mend me to my son, and tell him that I have never done anything that could prejudice the welfare of the kingdom, or his quality as king, nor derogated in any respect from our sovereign prerogative.

The EARL OF KENT *reads the sentence*: You have been found guilty of conspiring against the life of our sovereign lady Queen Elizabeth, and against her realm, therefore the sentence passed upon you is that your head shall be severed from your body.

QUEEN. I am a queen born, not subject to the laws. I have never sought the life of my cousin Elizabeth. (*She kneels to pray, holding up the crucifix.*)

KENT. It would be much better advised of you to have Christ in your heart, and not in your hand, Madam.

QUEEN. It is difficult to hold such an object in my hand without my heart being attached to the sufferings it represents. (*The two Executioners approach and attempt to remove her veil, but the QUEEN motions them away and says*): I have never had such rough valets before! Elizabeth and Jean, I require you. (*With their help she removes her veil and outer dress, saying*): I am not accustomed to do this before so many people. (*Her Maids sob aloud, and she says*): Instead of weeping, you should rejoice. I am very happy to leave

this world in so good a cause. (*She turns to the other Maids and says*): I give you all my blessing.

The Executioner *kneels and says*: We ask your pardon, Madam, for the deed we are about to do.

QUEEN. I forgive you, and all the authors of my death.

[*JEAN then bandages her eyes with the gold-fringed handkerchief, and all her Maids withdraw to the edge of the scaffold, weeping. She turns towards the block and kneels before it, saying: "My God, I have hoped in you. I commit myself to your hands." Then, being assisted, she lays her head on the block. The Executioner is so much affected that he aims unsteadily, and, missing the first blow, has to strike again. Then he holds up the head, saying, "God save Queen Elizabeth!"*]

SHREWSBURY. And so perish all her enemies!

KENT. Amen!

The girls, as before, made the necessary dresses and properties, and in order to get these correct to period and fashion, read all the available literature on the subject. Because Mary had declared herself to be a "good Frenchwoman," they utilised a skirt embroidered with fleurs-de-lis. They copied her peculiar head-dress carefully, using an old

bonnet-shape for the purpose and edging it with pearl beads. Holding up the head of the "traitor" they managed by letting the executioner strike the chair ("block") instead of the neck of the victim. At the first blow Mary sank to the floor, and by the second blow the second executioner stooped and, picking up a wig, hidden by the block all the while the rest of the play was in progress, held it aloft for the "head of a traitor."

I think the reader will agree that this was a very full and successful attempt to put together a play to illustrate the period. Besides which, it was an excellent writing and composition lesson, with plenty of transcription from various books to give practice in the spelling of new or difficult words, and the formation of the habit of reading for reference and information. I may also add that the manuscript from which I took the foregoing play was written out from memory, the girl who wrote it having lost her first copy.

CHAPTER VII

LITERATURE

OF course the children could not lay claim to a very extensive acquaintance with English literature if they limited their dramatic readings to Shakespeare's plays or Scott's historical novels. Their field of operations was much wider, but their methods of working were still original. They learned to recite such poems as "Charge of the Light Brigade," "Ye Mariners of England," and "Death of Nelson," but they introduced them in their plays, the last two named into their play "Nelson," and the former in "The Crimea." They selected a boy to recite while the dead Nelson lay in state; and he certainly made us all see mental pictures, and anything less like school recitations I never heard. I have heard the school ask for a fourth and fifth repetition of the "Charge of the Light Brigade," that much hackneyed school recitation! It was not hackneyed to them, of course, and they always concluded the piece by having the

"Roll Call" of supposed survivors, and they introduced a realistic touch by letting the last man stagger up just as his number was called, answer his name, and fall dead. It is just these little touches that children will add if they are allowed, and which make all the difference between the prosaic "memory work" repetitions and the glorious, *real, living recitations*.

The girls, too, in this matter were very original in their own way. In June, for instance, they would organise a sort of "Rose" play. On the day on which it took place the room was decorated entirely with roses of every sort. The elder girls selected a Rose Queen and called themselves Rose maidens. Then (and here my point comes in) they found out at least one good poem or part of a poem, or passage of poetical prose, from good standard authors, and either sang them or recited in turn before the Queen—generally accompanied by soft music on the piano—choosing good classical compositions where possible. In this way they "discovered" some charming old poems which are not, as a rule, found in schools. For example: "The rose had been washed, just washed in a shower, which Mary to Anna conveyed," and "The Rose upon my Balcony." Of course they included "The Solitary Rose," and any references to roses to be found in Tennyson, Wordsworth, Shakespear, &c., finishing up with

"The Last Rose of Summer," and the singing of a Sussex folk-song, "Rosebuds in June."

Children would often glorify their favourite poems in a way of their own. One little girl invited a chorus of girls to help her, and trained them to act in dumb show whilst she recited Wordsworth's "Daffodils" in a most inspired manner, to the accompaniment of soft music, generally Mendelssohn's "Spring Song." The chorus used to pretend to be daffodils, dressed in yellow and green crinkled paper; and they swayed, or danced, or nodded their heads, or went to sleep, or flashed, as the poem directed. All this was prepared and played directly after afternoon school—for many of the elder scholars would beg to be allowed to "stay in" after school hours and make up their plays and invent new ones.

Of course they very soon discovered possibilities in the works of Dickens. It had long been our rule to read the "Christmas Carol," and other Christmas tales every year just before Christmas-tide. Naturally when we commenced "playing" our lessons, the "Christmas Carol" showed its adaptability. The elder boys and girls commenced by acting the "Cratchitts' Christmas Dinner," and used to enter most wholeheartedly into the spirit of the thing. They were able to dress the piece more easily than their historical plays, because the

period represented was more modern. Bob Cratchitt wore a long white "comforter," which dangled below his waistcoat. He wore the black-tailed coat which did duty for an officer's coat in their "Nelson" play. They used to draw a table up in front of the school fire on dull, dreary, wet winter afternoons, and revel in the spirit of good-humour and loving-kindness which Dickens designed to inculcate.

I am quite sure that in the years ahead, when lessons on vulgar fractions have been long forgotten and "cobwebbed o'er," those afternoons, and the lessons they taught, will stand out in relief from the pages of memory.

If Shakespear was good for their improvement in English, so Dickens was their text-book for homely goodness. We who read and love Dickens know how magically he constructs an "atmosphere" for us—how, like a silver thread running through a string of pearls, goodness and virtue connect all the emotions he stirs in us. So it was with my small scholars. They acted the "Christmas Carol" every Christmas in their simple fashion, and they all felt better for it. From Tiny Tim they learned to sympathise with all weak, afflicted things. They learned contentment and resignation from Bob Cratchitt, who earned but "fifteen of his own namesakes every week, yet the spirit of Christmas

present blessed him." They learned cheerfulness and goodwill from Scrooge's nephew Fred, who, although "Christmas had never put a scrap of gold or silver in his pocket," said "God bless it," and would keep his Christmas humour to the last. Even Scrooge himself had lessons to teach them—to abhor meanness and selfishness; to be merciful; to use Christmas as a time for putting away all grudges and quarrels, as well as for settling up all debts; above all, not to be afraid of reforming thoroughly when necessary without being afraid of sneers or jeers. Fezziwig, too, bless his heart! who could "wink with his calves!" in the good old Sir Roger de Coverley dance and "never stagger," who danced with twenty pairs of partners, "people who *would* dance, too." Will the scholars ever recall Sompting school at Christmas-time without a smile and a tear for the "Fezziwigs' Ball," which they played so "really and truly" in the days gone by? The name Fezziwig will bring back to them the fat, rosy boy (stuffed in the region of the waistcoat with dusters to complete the illusion!) who sat up at the spindle-legged desk, once the hermit's cell for Friar Tuck, and beamed over spectacles, which sat with difficulty on his snub little nose, while he called, "Hello, Dick! Chirrup, Ebenezer!" and we all settled down to enjoy such a bright time.



Photo by

J. O. H. H. H.

NORTH AMERICAN INDIANS KILLING AND CUTTING UP ANIMALS FOR FOOD

It was all *real*. Truly the page was no "dead letter," but living spirit to us. How infectious was the motherly, beaming smile of Mrs. Fezziwig, bedight in cap and ribbons, and how we all felt really sorry for "the girl who had her ears boxed by her mistress," and "the boy who was suspected of not having enough to eat." I feel convinced that the mere act of playing and enjoying the "Christmas Carol" was a true education to my scholars—it drew out the latent sympathies in which they were not naturally lacking.

And I am quite sure that the type of so-called education which contents itself with such present "results" as a piece of composition, immaculately penned and all correctly spelt, while it may exhibit a glaring paucity of ideas, or is satisfied if it can show "four sums right and neatly worked"—is a very poor pretence at educating worthy men and women for the battle of life. Perhaps a critic may say that the religious and moral side of the children is attended to during the daily hour for religious instruction. But if religion be not the guiding principle of our daily life, for *all* day, it becomes worse than nothing to us. It is impossible to shut away moral teaching into a compartment of the mind. It should be freely and openly diffused throughout the thoughts, to "leaven the whole lump."

Also, I believe that "Scripture" is the one subject in most Elementary Schools which is still "examined." That is to say, set lessons from a pre-arranged syllabus are given to the scholars, whose knowledge of those lessons will then be tested on a given date. Naturally an examination expected will be prepared for. The children may consequently be expected to look to the examination as the end to be attained. One can easily appraise the moral value of whatever knowledge—mostly "fact-lore"—is gained under these conditions. So that there is a real need for some lessons in which the emotions shall not be ignored.

Nature Study, properly treated, can touch both senses and emotions—can be made an instinct leading up to Nature's God. There was a Great Teacher once who scorned not to teach the highest and grandest truths from simple parables on Nature—taught them, too, graphically, in the open air, from observation of the actual objects. So, too, good literature can stir human emotions, and guide and school human passions—can prevent us from excess of introspection, from dwelling on self; and there is more need for inculcating this love of Nature and good literature in the mind of the Elementary School child than in that of the child of higher station. In the latter case, the child may properly be left to parents who, being themselves

probably well cultured in mind, can look after the reading and moral training of their own child. But parents of the working class have no time, even if they have the ability, to direct their children's reading.

Therefore I judged it to be of vital importance that every one of my scholars should be given opportunity for getting on good terms with our English authors. We did not scorn the lighter vein, when it presented itself in the form of "The Pickwick Papers." I remember one real, all-round "dunce" being reformed and becoming a comparatively sharp boy through being cast for the part of Mr. Winkle in scenes which the boys got up from the early chapters of that book. It was quite a revelation to us all to view the awakening, or rather the transformation. The fact was that, rather than look ridiculous in the eyes of his schoolfellows, he made a great effort to read and master his "part," and, in doing so, discovered his own powers, which from that time onwards he cultivated and improved. When leaving school he expressed a desire to possess a copy of "The Pickwick Papers." He evidently did not intend throwing aside his books, but *had made a beginning and meant to go on.*

The girls were particularly fond of Louisa M. Alcott's "Little Women"—as, indeed, what girls

are not? They acted as much of this book as was possible, becoming so familiar with its contents that they could quote many of the chapters by heart.

Again, a kind friend presented us with copies of "Wood Magic" and "Bevis," both by Richard Jefferies. All three of the last-named books, I feel sure, were stories of the authors' own childhood. They were tales of human children, and they appealed, therefore, to human children. It is often said to me by girls' schoolmistresses, when discussing ways and means of using the Dramatic Method in school, that there is a difficulty in doing so where there are only girls and no boys for male parts. Well, Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy solved the difficulty, and in the story of their girlhood one can find ample material for a start. After that trust the girls to be resourceful enough to find their own ways and means.

In the story of "Bevis" we have an account of how two schoolboys "played" school; how they played a Roman battle; how they manufactured a gun, a raft, a boat, and went on a voyage of discovery round a small lake, finding a real island and living on it; which may all sound commonplace enough as I have described it, but which is very far from commonplace as written by the pen of Jefferies in real "boy" language. Our boys, on



Photo by

Clarke & Hyde.

NORTH AMERICAN INDIANS AT MEAL-TIME. ENGLISH SETTLER PLOUGHING IN THE BACKGROUND.

reading it, were instantly fired with the desire to play it. I must confess, so likewise was I ! Bevis's first craft was an old wooden packing-case and his scene of operations a brook near his house. Very good packing-cases we had in plenty in the school shed, and a brook within ten minutes of the school-house. The packing-cases were heavy, and July days are often hot, but down to the brooks we hied us on the hottest day I have ever experienced. The air quivered with heat, and not the slightest particle of shade could we find—not even a hawthorn-bush. But the spirit of adventure was upon us and would not be quenched. A network of brooks and drains separates Sompting from the sea-shore. These are spanned at intervals by rough wooden bridges for cattle to cross from one pasture to the other. Bridges have always a fascination for children, and we speedily chose the neighbourhood of one of them for our base of operations. Naturally we had to experiment a good deal before the packing-case behaved itself properly as a raft, but when it did and the first passenger gently punted under the bridge, excitement ran high. Soon off came boots and stockings and we were in the thick of a game. The raft went on voyage to all parts of places and the chorus sat along the banks to explain matters. One boy found his toes sinking into yellow clay. "Oh, this is gold !" shouted he.

"Then it must be Africa," cried one of the chorus. "Where I have been it is blue clay," said another. "Oh, that's diamonds," quickly decided the chorus; "it is South Africa." The high temperature supplied a realistic touch to the idea of "Africa's sunny fountains," and soon a "South African" game was in full progress, some of the little bare-legged boys forming an "ostrich farm."

There was no lack of interest next morning when we brought out the large map and the geography lesson began. The mere mention of South Africa brought the knowing little twinkles (which practised teachers recognise as their most encouraging sign) into all those suddenly alert eyes; tongues were loosened and every point of fact regarding that country was referred to the spot by the brooks where we had played. New names and the new facts regarding them were treasured up for naming special places by the brookside; for we had hidden our packing-case rafts in long reeds for future use. I can assure my readers that one particular book, "Bevis," had led to more than passing acquaintance with good literature, for the book rendered aid to the game, and, inversely, the game lent a halo to the book.

There was another book which became immensely popular with the children. It is called "Days Before History," and described the life of a boy

in prehistoric times. This book provided games which lasted for months and filled all the boys' playtimes and leisure hours. It appealed the more forcibly to children because it dealt with the life of a boy more particularly than with "grown-ups." The boy was named "Tig," and to this day the children remember their "Tig" games. They even built a shed, very roughly it is true, in the lane outside the school, and named it the "Tig shed." The wood was obtained from the remains of an old disused gallery and its accompanying desks. The boys supplied their own tools. At first they had made a hut on the hillside in the real fashion of Tig's relatives, by pulling down the lower branches of a convenient tree and pegging them to the ground, calling it their "roof-tree." But they wanted to be near the school premises; so, utilising the neighbouring trees as much as possible, they built a shed, where they played at prehistoric times. They read in their "Days Before History" of how the first cups and other utensils were made. So after a long and diligent hunt they found a spot where the right sort of clay was to be found, and set to work according to the directions in the book. I need not tell how delighted they were to mix and knead the clay with water, using their hands, nor of the delightful mess they made on the school floor in the region of the fireplace.

They proved by painful experience that prehistoric man had evidently nothing to learn from educated folks on the subject of pottery-making without tools, for their first rough basins cracked in the baking process, which took place in the hot ashes piled over them. A second attempt resulted in better-shaped cups, which would stand straight and hold water. There was a great ceremony of drinking water from *the* cup. Subsequently it was placed in the school museum and often passed for a bit of real antique work.

There is very little difference between this game of making prehistoric pottery and clay-modelling lessons in school. But that tiny and essential bit of difference makes all the difference. It is a game, not a "lesson." It is enthusiastic (not to say impulsive!), not dull. It is voluntary, not forced. It teaches self-reliance, not reliance on a teacher's initiative. It is informal, not formal.

After we had played at being Stone Age folk, one can imagine that more than a casual and passing interest attached itself to some really good specimens of Stone Age axe-heads, flint scrapers, and arrow-heads, which had for some years reposed in the school museum. We realised how much men had lost by civilisation when we tried, fruitlessly, to chip a flint into an axe-head—or into any shape at all—much less to polish or grind it!

Our attempts at prehistoric cookery met with greater success. Having read up directions from the history of Tig, one of the boys smuggled a herring into school, whilst some one else brought clay. The herring in its clay covering was placed in hot ashes under the fireplace and allowed to remain there during drawing-lesson time. A few potatoes, dug from the boys' own school garden, kept it company; but this was an anachronism, since we all knew that potatoes did not grow in England when Tig was a boy. At playtime the herring was sampled, and, of course, voted the best ever tasted—albeit the side nearest the fire was charred. An unlucky visitor who chanced to call was forced to taste the herring, and being a man who had roughed it in Australia, he did so with a very good grace indeed. After this I left the game and the shed to itself, and many a jolly hour did the boys spend after schooltime playing at "Tig" in their shed. The same shed was also well suited to games of settlers and backwoodsmen. Once I found the boys playing at "Princes in the Tower," and the game was so good that I immediately commandeered it for school use.

CHAPTER VIII

GEOGRAPHY

THE Geography Lesson gave us no trouble to dramatise, and was particularly well adapted for being played as a game. The geography game began by being played in the desks with sand modelling trays, and drawing in colours. Children would model a county, or a part of a country, and cut out paper lighthouses, make paper boats and bridges, or paper animals, and place them standing upright in the sand. Then in turn with their teacher they would talk about them. Again they would make coloured drawings (of their own—each child originating according to its own mental impressions) to illustrate the lessons on towns or districts which had been given to them. For instance, one child, to illustrate a lesson on Reading, had drawn a large factory with horses and wagons outside. This, he explained, was a biscuit factory. Another large building appeared at the end of a roadway represented by two wavy lines. This he had labelled a gaol—and so on.

Our next step in the direction of geography games was suggested by a little Standard III. scholar. I discovered her, one wet dinner-hour, with the map of the world spread out on the floor, and a ring of small, eager children kneeling around it. She had a little black nigger doll in a tiny toy boat on wheels, and she was pretending to bring it on a voyage from South Africa to England. All the while she kept up a string of sentences in squeaky broken English, supposed to be spoken by the black-a-moor.

Incidentally and unconsciously she was giving her small audience a splendid idea of the various interesting things and places passed, and even climatic conditions. For she made the doll shiver when it got into colder latitudes. Funniest of all, when she landed him at the London Docks, she produced a little tin toy railway train (ever so many sizes smaller than the doll!) and seating him on it, rattled him off to a "woollen" town to buy a cloth overcoat. Quickly some one suggested: "Can we play it again to-morrow, and then I'll bring a little overcoat? - I'll make it to-night." Another followed with: "I'll make it a whole suit." They were as good as their words, and on the following morning the whole class joined in the game with great gusto. The little nigger was rattled all over the map of England and bought presents at every stopping-place. Afterwards, of course, he was treated to a voyage home, by a

different route from that taken when voyaging to England. He had to show his friends his presents and tell where he bought them. Notice how, unconsciously, the children introduced repetition to strengthen memory. They were really repeating the manufactures of English towns—only they did not do it in the bad old “learning-strings-of-facts” way.

We played the nigger doll and other doll games until we, quite naturally, drifted into substituting real live scholars for the dolls, and, once more hanging up the maps, pretended that various parts of the schoolroom, or playground, or neighbourhood were the physical features of other places. This I called the geography game proper, and it originated in the classroom set apart for Standards I. and II. Their first game dealt with the zones. They pretended that the north side of their room was the North Pole—it happened to be the coldest side of the room, and the fireplace, being on the south side, made a very appropriate warmth for the “Equator.” The “Arctic region” was inhabited by boys who pretended to be Esquimaux, Polar bears, seals, walruses, or reindeer. Other scholars pretended to be icebergs, Jack Frost, frozen sea, &c. A sharp boy and girl were picked out and allowed to be travellers in the Arctic region, where they held conversations with the Esquimaux, during which the latter described the conditions under which they were supposed to live, climate,

seasons, &c. The next day they varied the game by getting into a big ship—the ever-useful soap-box on wheels—and being jammed in the ice-floes.

Their method of representing iceberg was novel, being merely two rows of little girls with their white pinafores over their heads. They were quite glad to be anything, so long as they were "in the game," and busied themselves by making up a long speech about the iceberg, finishing up with an original verse in which, I remember, "ice and snow" rhymed conveniently with "Esquimaux." The Esquimaux boys had a little scene of their own, pretending to break holes in the ice and spear seals and fish—the two latter being impersonated by small boys who "swam" under the desks, the tops of which represented ice. The inkwell holes were the breathing holes for the "seals."

On a third day the "iceberg" was allowed to break away from its surrounding ice under the more genial air of spring, and travel to Newfoundland. *En route* it collided with a "ship," which it wrecked. Of course the "wreck" was the outcome of the "fog" which sprang into being on the approach of the iceberg to the shores of Newfoundland. The "fog" was composed of a laneway of little girls waving their pinafores up and down. Then Newfoundland fishermen bravely came to the rescue of the wrecked Englishmen and rowed them ashore in a boat. The little girls who had been a fog

most obligingly now became "codfish drying in the sun." This time the ever versatile pinafores were dangled over backs and their owners stood in a row with their faces to the wall. Of course the rescued men, while being accommodated in the fishermen's hut, asked questions on all that they saw. First they noticed the "codfish drying in the sun," and the fishermen told them that they caught about "one hundred and fifty millions of codfish in one year." The game then went on in a kind of dialogue :

TRAVELLER. Are cod the only fish you catch?

FISHERMAN. Oh, no! We catch plenty of salmon in the rivers, too.

TRAVELLER. Do the fogs trouble you on the island?

FISHERMAN. The fogs do not come any nearer than the Grand Banks out there, unless a south-east wind blows.

TRAVELLER. Do you grow pretty much the same crops as we do in England?

FISHERMAN. Well, barley and oats grow everywhere, but not wheat. We have a very even and moist climate, so we grow grasses regularly.

TRAVELLER. How large is this island?

FISHERMAN. Some say it is much larger than Ireland, and it is the nearest American land to Ireland.

TRAVELLER. I daresay you are proud to belong to the Dominion of Canada?

FISHERMAN (*indignantly*). That is just where you Englishmen show ignorance. We do not belong to Canada. We are a separate colony—Britain's oldest colony!

TRAVELLER. Oh, I am sorry I made such a mistake, but I shall make no mistake if I say what a splendid harbour you have here.

FISHERMAN. Ah! you may say that with truth. The harbour of St. John's is one of the very best on the Atlantic Coast. (*Here the rest of the class stamp loudly on the floor.*)

TRAVELLER. What is that?

FISHERMAN. That's the thirty-two pounder. It will go off every half-hour in foggy weather. (*Class make prolonged siren hoot.*) And that's a compressed air-trumpet which blows every minute to warn ships.

The reader can, no doubt, trace the influence of the text-book on geography in this dialogue. The point is, that the dry matter is broken up into dialogue, and, by means of action, movement, interest, and repetition is rendered easy to memorise.

Naturally, the game having taken root, another was soon in progress, and this time the travellers set out for the warm end of the room, otherwise the Equator and the Torrid Zone. This

time also a boy represented the Emperor Equator and the Torrid Zone was his Sun Palace. Children impersonated elephants, tigers, and serpents. The travellers were supposed to be bitten by the latter and to fall ill, &c. They found large butterflies and mosquitoes. One of them caught the fever. One part of the room became a jungle, very hot, with no rain for a long time, then suddenly torrents of rain (imitated by children tapping one finger on the palm of the other hand like the pattering of rain). The travellers got into swampy ground; here they found the hippopotamuses, rolling in the muddy pools, and the rhinoceros. Of course the boys thoroughly enjoyed representing these animals. It was also quite to their taste to be native bearers. They rigged up two bamboo poles with sacking stretched across them, and gave the travellers rides across the swampy ground in fine style. During the whole time dialogue was kept up and the various "animals" acted their parts—the travellers asking questions in the style of the previous game, and the natives answering them. Crossing the rivers the travellers had hairbreadth escapes from crocodiles and alligators. Now and again they stalked and shot an antelope, and a boy with a long neck was selected for a giraffe. The school palm was supposed to be a date-palm. Some one brought real dates, which the traveller pretended to gather and eat. As each child was expected to represent some

person or thing if possible, they were sometimes puzzled to find something which had not already been chosen by a companion; and to show how well they looked up their subject, they chose, in addition to the things already mentioned, aloes, coffee, gold and gold-dust, gorillas, chimpanzees, parrots, and ostriches.

The other zones furnished games of a similar sort, with, of course, the little variations and originalities which children will introduce into the games they play spontaneously.

Standard III. Next essayed the Geography game, and (here comes in the benefit to be derived from allowing the scholars to make their personality felt in the choice of means of expression) their game had more of real play in it than of drama. Their first game they styled "Coal and Iron Towns." From their geography books they picked out the names of all the towns in England specially noted for coal or iron produce. These they printed with coloured paints on drawing-paper, in type large enough to be read by all the children in the class at once when held in front of their desks. The name of the town was printed very large, and underneath appeared the names of the articles for which the town was noted. This occupied but a very short time when each child undertook one ticket. Then they chose a boy or a girl to hold each ticket in front of the class, having first placed them in posi-

tions as nearly as possible approaching the correct geographical positions on the map. The "director" of the game appointed himself a merchant in an office, with a telephone and a typewriter fixed up. The telephone, by the way, was a long string with a tin lid fastened at each end. He waited until the whole class had been given time to master fairly well the names of the towns and their produce. Then all the "towns" turned their tickets blank side outwards. The "merchant" telephoned to the "office" (otherwise the class) to "send up Mr. So-and-so"—naming one of the boys. Mr. So-and-so duly came up and received his orders. Perhaps it was: "Mr. So-and-so, you are to go to all the "iron" towns of England and bring me samples of iron from each. I have written to the principal firms and told them that you will call for samples."

Mr. So-and-so then had to board a train (a boy's back, of course!) which stopped at *every* town. If it were an "iron" town, he was to get out, take a sample of iron, and go on again. If it were not, he must sit still in the train until it moved off again.

The train would start amidst much screeching, whistling, and steam-engine noises. Pulling up at the first station, which would perhaps be Newcastle-on-Tyne, the boy holding the name card would call out "Newcastle! Newcastle!" Should

Mr. So-and-so sit still and impassive, the train would presently move on again, but should he, from ignorance, alight from the train and demand, "A sample of your iron, please," the holder of the name card would triumphantly turn it round and show "noted for coal, ship-building, machinery, chemicals, glass." A telephone message would be flashed along to the master "Your man wasting his time at Newcastle." Should he pass an "iron" town and fail to alight, a telephone message would be sent: "Your man neglected to call at Middlesbrough."

The "master" made a note of all these little messages; and when his "man" came to report himself and show his samples, his errors would be pointed out to him and a certain sum docked from his payment. He was sometimes told that his services as traveller would not be required again. The fun of the game came next; for, as he returned from the master's office, the "towns" formed up in two rows facing one another, and he had to "run the gauntlet" to the tune of "Newcastle for coal; Middlesbrough for iron," to the accompaniment of playful blows with handkerchiefs. The game would progress until all the chorus had taken their turn at being traveller.

The class next made out tickets for a game combining "cotton and woollen" towns of England, and played it in a similar way, afterwards making

another game including all the other manufactures which they could find out.

As soon as the "manufactures" were so well known that the chorus made very few, if any, mistakes, the class next attempted some more dramatic geography.

They would take one county or district and try to represent it in the form of a play. They followed the order of their text-book on geography and began with the northern counties, and not, as one might have supposed, with Sussex or London. Their dramatic rendering of Cumberland and the Lake District was interesting and amusing. The chorus of little girls referred to in this chapter before knelt on the floor in an irregular oval shape, as nearly like the shape of Lake Windermere as the space would permit. Each one of them then prepared a speech about the lake. On the whole the speeches were fairly correct and had the merit of being their own. Here is one:—

"We are the lake fairies. We live on Lake Windermere. It is a beautiful lake of clear water studded with islands. It is the longest, largest, and most beautiful lake in the district, and I am sure it well deserves the name of 'Queen of the Lakes.' It is fourteen miles in length, and in one place it is forty fathoms deep. Look there towards the north and see how it is surrounded by grand peaks and mountain masses.

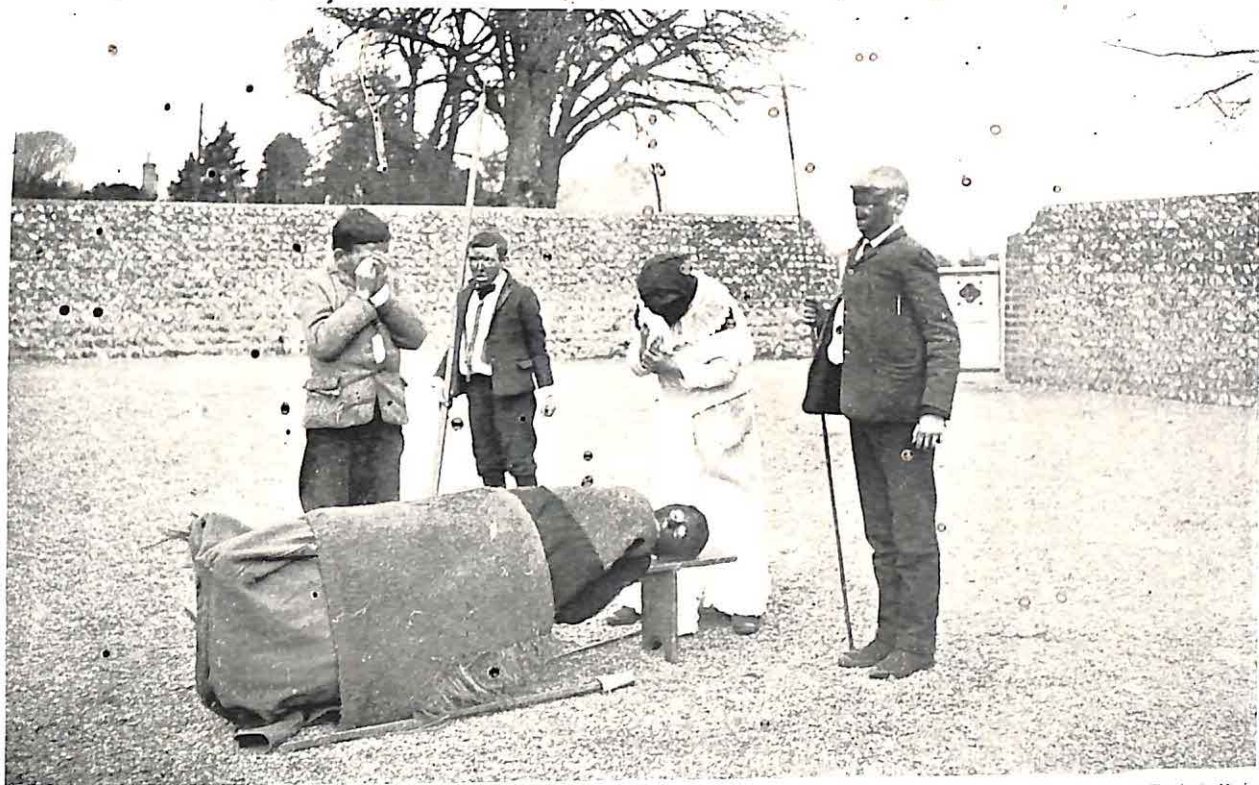


Photo by

(Clarke & Hyde)

A MAORI FUNERAL CEREMONY.
(With door-mats, bone spear, and crying lady.)

Perhaps you can see the 'mighty Helvellyn.' From its southern end it sends out the River Leven, which runs into Morecambe Bay."

A party of the elder scholars of the class now pretended to be Lancashire people out on an excursion to the Lake District. They arranged a railway-station at each end of the room, and a train (two soap-boxes—one for engine and one for carriages!), and, after taking tickets, with cardboard coins, they alighted at Keswick Station. Here, on alighting, before going to view the lakes, they decided to look at the blacklead pencil factory and to go down a lead-mine. This was splendid fun. They slung a stout rope over one of the school beams and fastened an old waste-paper basket at one end, several boys holding the other end. A small boy now volunteered to descend the mine in the cage. He got into the basket and held on tightly with both hands. Then the boys first hauled him up to the beam and afterwards slowly let him down again. By this time some of the boys had converted themselves into miners, all pretending to work diligently. The visitor was shown over the mine—asking questions all the while—and on leaving had a lead pencil given to him as a souvenir. Leaving Keswick (which, from thence, they always connected in their minds with lead pencils, the mine, and the waste-paper basket!), they again took train to Windermere. Here they

had rigged up a grand hotel with the magic sign "Teas provided" outside. I wondered what this had to do with geography, but later I found out their ingenuity. The travellers admired the lake, hired a boat, and were rowed about in it, talked to the boatman and to some fishermen whom they passed, talked and listened to the lake fairies (one of whose speeches is recorded above), and finally went to the hotel. Here they decided to sleep for the night, and, sending for the proprietress, they asked if they might have fresh fish for supper.

LANDLADY. Oh, yes! I will send my man to catch some for you.

TRAVELLER. Does he catch them in the lake?

LANDLADY. No, in the river which runs from the lake.

TRAVELLER. What river is that?

LANDLADY. The Leven.

TRAVELLER. Which will be the next nearest lake for us to visit?

LANDLADY. I should say Coniston Water, and there you may see Ruskin's house.

TRAVELLER. Well, I think if that neighbourhood has scenery as grand as this, that Ruskin knew where he could study the beauties of Nature.

LANDLADY. Oh, the lakes are not just beautiful, they are useful too. There is one called Thirl-

mère, a very beautiful and clear lake. It supplies Manchester with drinking water.

TRAVELLER. But Manchester must be at least seventy miles away!

LANDLADY. I'm no good at figures, but I know the water is carried to Manchester in pipes.

TRAVELLER (*takes out map, and after finding Thirlmere, moves his finger aside and says*): I see that Derwentwater is quite near to Thirlmere, and here is Skiddaw marked to the north of it.

LANDLADY. Some people think Derwentwater the prettiest lake. At all events, the Derwent River is the only one of importance in this district. But Grasmere and Rydal Water are really the most interesting places to visit.

TRAVELLER. And why is that?

LANDLADY. Because so many poets and authors have lived there and written about them. You have heard of Wordsworth. The last years of his life were passed at "Rydal Mount," a beautiful house, and he is buried in Grasmere Churchyard.

TRAVELLER'S LITTLE BOY. Yes, father. We have learned a good many of Wordsworth's poems and read a good many more. One is called "The Cumberland Beggar," and another is "The Pet Lamb." There are a lot about Duddon River too.

LANDLADY. There's hardly a rock or stream or nook about this part which he did not visit and write about. My grandfather often met him out

on his long tramps over the hills and dales. He wasn't the only one. A great friend of his, Coleridge, stayed about here and wrote too, and Southey, and De Quincey.

LITTLE BOY. Oh, dad, I know something that Southey wrote. It was "The Falls of Lodore." Do take me to see the falls. They must be wonderful.

LITTLE GIRL. When the Spanish Armada came to England, the people lit a beacon fire on Skid-da-. We read it in a piece of poetry called "The Armada," by Macaulay.

TRAVELLER. Well, we will go to bed now, and to-morrow morning, first thing, we will do what Wordsworth did: we will tramp over hill and dale, and see all we can.

LANDLADY. Ah! that's if it doesn't rain, sir!

TRAVELLER. Ha, ha! That's a sly hit at the climate. I know you are noted for having the rainiest climate in England. What causes it?

LANDLADY. Some say it is the moist winds from the Atlantic.

TRAVELLER. I suppose the mountains attract the great rainfall and cause the great lakes at the same time.

LANDLADY. Well, we are not so badly off as the people at Seathwaite, near here. They say it rains there every day of the year but one!

TRAVELLER. Well, now to bed, and let us all wish for a fine day to-morrow.



[Photo by]

[Photo by H. J. de]

AN ARITHMETIC GAME CONDUCTED BY THE HEAD TEACHER.

This would end the first scene, and the children would next proceed on their "tramp," pretending to visit the places discussed and making up little conversations with the people they found there. They bought picture postcards of the Lake District, and appointed a boy or girl to sell them for cardboard coins at each place. Some of their remarks were very apt. For instance, when they came to some supposed rough, rocky mountain paths, they pretended to find a primrose, and said: "That must be Wordsworth's 'Primrose of the Rock.'" Then they found a little nook (in the playground which was now their "Cumberland") with a violet growing in it. It was really a rockwork which they had made as infants for their first Nature study. One said: "Oh! there's a beautiful waterfall! See how it sparkles and foams." And another chimed in: "Look at those great boulder stones 'fleeced with moss,' and those shady trees dipping into the water." "Oh, I am sure," added a third, "this is the nook which Wordsworth wrote of, where 'the violet of five summers reappears, and fades unseen by any human eye.'"

On another afternoon they arranged a grand realistic visit to the Falls of Lodore, to take place in their playtime, and prepared for during their dinner-hour. They had, some time before this, dug a deep trench along one side of their playground in order to drain off the stagnant water which

interfered with play and drill. At the lower end of the trench they had knocked a hole in the boundary wall and inserted a drain-pipe, which, when the trench was full, caused a miniature waterfall into the laneway outside the wall. The boys dug away the bank under the drain-pipe to emphasise this. But on the day of the great visit to the Falls of Lodore the weather was cloudless and fine, behaving altogether in a most un-Cunberlandesque fashion. But there had to be a Falls of Lodore. So a council was held and the boys got over the difficulty. They carried out an old blackboard, placed it against the wall over the trench in a slanting position, and heaped great stones all over it—to hide the fact that it was a blackboard, and also to give an appearance of realism to the “splashing and dashing” mentioned in the poem. One boy filled a tin bath with water. At the appointed time, when the travellers, armed with the book containing Southey’s poem, arrived at the spot, the boy (who had filled the bath and hoisted it to the top of the wall, where he sat astride and held it) slowly tipped the bath over, and, behold! the Falls of Lodore.

The same part of the playground was admirably suited to the purposes of the elder scholars when playing “Switzerland.” They amplified the blackboard idea and carried out the top of a movable platform which they placed slantwise against

the wall and styled a "glacier," and which they climbed with great difficulty and much play of alpenstock, ice-axe, rope, and guides. Needless to say the "guides" had to be well up in their subjects, and to know the names and peculiarities of all the "peaks" of the playground. The elder scholars could make really good and interesting plays, and did not make the text-book source of their information quite so obvious. They had evidently learned the "art of concealing art." They did not merely rig up a glacier, but they named it and placed it correctly with regard to other physical features. They had adventures on it too. Falling over the edge was tumbling into a crevasse. One of their number fell over. The guides and others did a gallant rescue. The Swiss game was not complete without an avalanche, while the tourists (who were the life of the game) were sleeping in a hillside cottage. Some one who possessed a wooden carved model of a Swiss cottage brought it to school. After that the "cottage" was always the easel with projecting table under which the inmates sat. The "Swiss" girls (having practised considerably on the sly) treated us to Swiss "jodelling." Herds of cows and goats were driven along and the fact elicited from the "peasants" that the milk was to be condensed and sent to England—probably retailed in Sompting. Samples of Swiss milk chocolate were taken (and evi-

dently found up to par!) and questions asked as to the size, government, education, language, and history of Switzerland.

Of course the elder girls could easily arrange costumes for this game, and they were always giving us little surprises. On one occasion it was a nice little dairy they had rigged up, with clean-scrubbed, red flower-pots for dairy pans. On another occasion it was the decoration of the Swiss cottage with gentians and "edelweiss" (make-believe, of course). The boys made up a St. Bernard game with two of their number as St. Bernard dogs with little tins strapped in front of them. It was noticeable that they always exhausted every authority available in these geography games, and, as they used to say themselves, "If we went over to those countries, we should not feel at all strange now; we should know what to look for."

When we played "France" the girls supplied a little surprise. Of course, being quite a rural school in an agricultural district, French was not a "subject" on the time-table. But the girls had been much interested in the little lessons in French given in the "Children's Encyclopædia," and they came out surprisingly with a few little phrases such as: "*Oui, madame,*" "*au revoir,*" "*bon jour,*" and others relating to the voyage, the weather, &c., all of which I welcomed as stimulating ambition and a step on the right road.

Canada was found to be peculiarly adapted to form the subject of a play of this kind, and several games were made up by the elder scholars on the different parts of the Dominion. The great thing was that the scholars avoided monotony by not treating any two districts quite alike.

In their first Canadian game they dealt with the "lumbering" district, some of them impersonating animals, settlers, and Indians. The latter wore striped blankets, rugs, or tablecloths to distinguish them from settlers, and had fearful and wonderful head-dresses of feathers sewn on wide tape tied round their heads. Sometimes they took the trouble to paint their faces, and we possessed one pair of real Indian's shoes with the peculiar coloured grass-work of the North-American Indian decorating them. These were worn by the most important "chief." The Indian would hunt the beaver, sometimes shooting but more often trapping them. They were made to go on the "war-path," uttering strange whoops and shrieks and waving tomahawks and scalping knives (cut out in stiff cardboard). The Indians would then make their exit, and enter the lumbermen. A real tree, a small one rooted up by permission when on a ramble, would be brought into school and fixed upright in a tub. Then the lumbermen would come along and mark out trees to be cut. The tree would be chopped down, and, in conversation, the men

would let us know that the trees were being cut, but could not be floated down the river until the "freshets" started. These, they explained, were sudden risings of the rivers which occurred very quickly in the spring-time owing to the sudden thawing of the snow and ice. The ice was supposed to break up and the men would pretend to push the logs into the water. This was great fun, for one boy brought some long pieces of chains, and we pretended to sling the logs into the stream and form rafts. Then the boys gave us a realistic bit of acting, jumping on the rafts and guiding them along by pushing the river-bank (floor!) with poles. They really did manage to slide their logs along, much to the joy of the enthusiastic on-lookers. Then amidst tense excitement they made their logs jamb and the men pretended to break the ice. Some of their number were "injured" at this point and had to receive "first aid" from their companions. They would bring out in their dialogue the names of the rivers as they floated down them and of the ports to which they would presently come. The logs would be sawn into "deals" and shipped, the boys who were "lumbermen" quickly becoming men working the steam saws at Ottawa. While the men were chopping down the trees, in the "winter" scene, traders would come and bargain for the wood. The young actors tried to be correct and talked "dollars"

instead of £ s. d. The talk would take place in the "shanty," rigged up with easels, blackboards, and forms. Then other boys dressed as Indians would steal in and listen outside the shanty. They would offer skins to the lumbermen and exchange them for corn, tobacco, beads, and whisky. Then some of the rougher lumbermen would pretend to lie in wait for the trader to rob and kill him; after a scuffle he would escape on his rough horse. While this was going on the Indians would loot the shanty and steal away again.

What struck me most forcibly always was the fact that nothing—the amount of preparation, the arrangement of multitudinous details, the memorising of long, long parts, or the making of copious notes—ever seemed to be looked upon as the least trouble. The truth was all these things constituted healthy brain and bodily activity for normal children, and developed them equally in all directions. It seems to me that it is only when the balance of Nature is upset, that boredom, fag, and "its-too-much-trouble-itis" sets in. And even adults never confess to weariness when they want to do anything: the pleasure outbalances the other sensations.

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From their conversation it was made clear that the elder son was off to Australia on the morrow. The aged father said: "So you're off, my lad, to-morrow, thirteen thousand miles—'tis a long way to sail! And do ye tell me, lad, that you'll be right round t'other side of the world, with your feet pointing towards ours? However will ye keep from falling off?"

The mother chimed in here with: "Oh, dear! Oh, dear! To think I brought ye up for this—to go walking around on your head!" The two sons then explained everything as well as they could about the world being round and revolving on its axis, and why folks neither stand on their heads nor fly off into space, and the second scene showed the elder son leaving Southampton, while his parents and brother waved him a tearful farewell. The chorus described Southampton and also the journey as the "ship" slowly proceeded down the room. Maps were produced here—on the children's own initiative—and the places called at, as well as the port where the emigrant was to land, were correctly named and described. Arrived in the new country, the settler pretended to hunt for work. He got addresses of farmers who wanted hands from a boy who represented an agent. Calling on the first farmer, he asked for work.

FARMER. Where do you come from?

*Ph. C. H. Co.**Charles C. H. Co.*

A NATURE STUDY GAME. "QUESTIONING THE FLOWERS."

EMIGRANT. Oh, from Sussex.

FARMER. Ah ! you are just the lad for me. Do you know anything about sheep ?

EMIGRANT. Why, yes ! The South Downs are noted for them.

FARMER. Then perhaps you can shoot a rabbit or two ! I wish you'd help me to get rid of a few. I am fairly overrun with them.

EMIGRANT. Ah ! many's the young wild rabbit I've brought back for supper at home in Sussex.

In conversation like this the farmer engaged the emigrant, and the conditions, climate, flora, fauna, &c., of the district were pointed out to him.

Another scene showed the emigrant, after a couple of years had elapsed, with a sheep farm of his own. His brother from Sussex arrives on the scene, having come out to assist him. On his first day the emigrant and his brother take a ride round part of the farm (splendid opportunity to ride on another boy's back !) and we learn a little more, for as they ride they converse :

VISITOR. Why, you seem to have no grass here.

EMIGRANT. Ah, we are having a long, dry season, and it has been long enough to make every blade of grass dry up and wither away.

VISITOR. Then how do you feed your hundreds of sheep ?

EMIGRANT. Oh, they eat those scrubby-looking

desert shrubs that even the drought cannot kill. It is astonishing how Nature provides those plants with the means to resist the dry weather and burning heat.

VISITOR. I should think you are glad of rain and do not call rainy weather "bad weather" as we do in England often.

EMIGRANT. Ah! you should see it when it *does* rain. Torrents—bucketsful! Rivers overflowing—floods everywhere—sheep drowned. It is a treat to stand out and soak in it.

VISITOR. Those are fine trees. What are they?

EMIGRANT. Eucalyptus or gum-trees. Some of those are 250 feet high and as much as 20 feet round the trunk. Those pretty trees near the house are acacias, or wattles. The eucalyptus-trees look strange to you because their leaves are vertical instead of parallel to the ground and they shed their bark instead of their leaves.

VISITOR. I know why their leaves are twisted so. It must be to present the smallest surface to the scorching sun, otherwise the leaves would be burnt up and the tree would die. There are dwarf beans which grow in our gardens at home in Sussex that turn their leaves so during the hottest part of the day for the same reason.

EMIGRANT. I fancy there's another reason. Leaves so turned allow every drop of rain to fall close to the tree and keep none from the ground

as you may see English trees do. Besides, the leaves in that position offer no lodging-place for dust, which clogs the pores of leaves, and we have dreadful sand-laden winds sometimes, "brick-dust winds" they are called.

VISITOR. You have some queer animals about ; whatever is that creature?

EMIGRANT. Oh, our native animals are queer, and, like the native plants, of no use to man. That's a kangaroo with a young kangaroo in its pouch. I'll show you a platypus—an animal which has feet and bill like a duck and which lays eggs. We have beautiful birds—one is the lyre bird—but you will not hear the song-birds of old England. What wouldn't I give to hear a missel-thrush sing again !

VISITOR. Well, at any rate, I see one familiar old friend here !

EMIGRANT. Who's that?

VISITOR. The Scotch thistle.

EMIGRANT. Yes, however it got here, it means to stay. The Government is spending pots of money in trying to get rid of it. I expect it came over with the Scotch cattle and won't go until they do !

VISITOR. There go more rabbits ! Upon my word the whole place is alive with them.

EMIGRANT. Yes, in ten years they did £3,000,000 worth of damage in Victoria, and the sparrows are nearly as bad. But we send millions of rabbit-

desert shrubs that even the drought cannot kill. It is astonishing how Nature provides those plants with the means to resist the dry weather and burning heat.

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skins to England to be used in making felt hats and furs.

VISITOR. When I came to the railway terminus on my way to Southampton to join the ship, I saw a lot of frozen sheep all sewn up in white cloths waiting to be put in the train for London. The cloths were stamped with the name "Barnes & Downey."

EMIGRANT. Well, I never! That's the name of the firm of agents where I send my sheep. They are both Sussex men, and it so happens I expect them to-day. There's a trap driving up to the gate of our farmhouse now. You will soon meet an Englishman.

[They trot back to the end of the room, called the farmhouse. Two visitors drive in seated in soap-box "buggy." They shake hands with the emigrant and his brother. The latter exclaims: "Why, I remember you! Aren't you old Teddie Barnes, who came with me to Sompting school, and used to help us act our lessons so well?"]

BARNES. Oh, yes! But you mustn't call me that now, you know, for I've nearly made my fortune.

VISITOR *(laughing)*. Ah, then I'd like to make closer acquaintance with you!

DOWNEY. Well, what have we for dinner to-day—sheep, mutton, ram, or lamb?



A FAIRY PLAY. NATURE STUDY IDEALISED.

EMIGRANT (*to younger brother*). That's an old joke of ours, but it is pretty nearly true !

YOUNGER BROTHER. Well, in old England it seems to be mutton and beef, beef and mutton.

Then, in course of conversation, it transpires that the emigrant, who is now called a "squatter," owns 10,000 sheep, and as the pasture is scantier than in England, this means many thousands of acres of land. The shepherds are mounted men who spend all day in the saddle. The agents tell of the hundreds of frozen sheep and bales of wool which pass through their hands yearly. So the game ends for the day, to be varied on another occasion by taking the Divisions of Australia separately, and, amongst other things, showing the famous "Broken Hill" silver-mine.

Just as the children were interested in playing their "Australia" games a friend visited the school, fresh from a tour in New Zealand. Hurrah ! Such an attentive audience surely never listened to geographical lecturer before ! Those cunning children had quickly grasped the fact that there was "copy" -- otherwise games -- to be secured, and no sooner was the visitor's back turned than they were busy concocting a "New Zealand" game. They planned out three scenes, viz. :

1. New Zealand and visit of Captain Cook ;
murder of Captain Cook ; cannibals eating

human flesh ; introduction of pigs ; natives converted from cannibalistic tastes owing to superior flavour (!) of pigs.

2. Early settlers civilising the natives.
3. Present-day conditions ; sheep farms ; description of flora and fauna ; frozen meat exports ; native customs as shown by funeral ceremony of Maoris, including Maori "crying lady" (who shed tears from a small bottle of water hidden in a large handkerchief).

This game included some fine realistic "effects," for one boy brought a tame jackdaw which did duty for the quaint native wingless bird, the apteryx. As a grand finale the boys constructed a model volcano, which "worked" all right with the aid of a heap of sand and some fireworks, &c.

New Zealand would not have been correct without some reference to hot springs and mud lakes. The way the boys introduced them was funny. They supposed themselves to be travellers mounted on "ponies," and rode up and down the room pointing out the scenery in this fashion: "What a splendid bit of scenery! What is that snow-covered mountain?" "Oh, that is Mount Cook, named after Captain Cook, who—— Oh—h—h!" Here the "pony" reared back on its haunches, almost throwing the boy off its back, and refusing to move.

Its rider tried to force it on. The other riders dismounted and ran towards him. One of their number fell prone on the floor and appeared to grovel about, as though in the water. "Help, help, drag me out!" he yelled. "What is it?" they all cried, as they pulled him out. "A mud lake, I expect," answered the victim. "What was it like?" they all asked. "Hot," replied the muddy one; "I should have been cooked if I had stayed in there long." The whole game, in fact, teemed with incidents extremely funny to an adult spectator (although perfectly serious as far as the scholars were concerned). For instance, when Captain Cook was overwhelmed by the cannibals and just about to die, he called out to his men: "Escape for your lives, men! You can do me no good. Farewell! Tell them in England that I died a *noble man!*" As if Captain Cook would have found time to brag, or that there could be anything noble in being ignominiously eaten by degraded cannibals! Not that this was, in itself, funny; it was the melodramatic strut and pose of the juvenile Cook which almost convulsed one.

The savages were made to speak a kind of broken English, interspersed with squeaks and "wows." They devoured "human" arms made of brown paper, stuffed. When persuaded to abstain from such delicacies, in favour of stuffed brown paper pig, they had an eye to the main chance, for

they said: "No let us eatee mans any more. We catchee mans and eatee them. But p'r'aps some day mans catchee us and eatee *us*. Not safe. Better all eatee pig!"

Very comical, too, was the boys' attempt to show how natives were civilised. They pretended to chop down trees for wood with which to build houses. The natives gathered round and watched them from a distance. Soon the "settlers" beckoned to the natives and held out coloured cloth and strings of beads, &c. The natives pressed forward, saying, "Me? Me?" and holding out their hands. The settlers handed them the axes and pointed to the trees, signing to them to "Chop-chop," and, then pointing to the beads, &c. But the savages, taking the axes, turned to attack the settlers, who, after a struggle, *got them back and once* more showed what they wanted before the natives could have the beads. At last they got them to work and duly rewarded them. Observe that the childish idea of civilising was by means of teaching handicraft, or, shall we say, of utilising handicraft to the advantage of the superior-witted party!

The funeral ceremony of the native Maoris had been described at length by our visitor, but much had been left to the imagination, as, for instance, the spoken words. The boys enacting the scene blacked their faces—shall I confess it?—by rubbing their hands up the chimney. They laid the dead

*Photo by*

MAKING A VEGETABLE GARDEN, WITH A HOME-MADE FENCE.

[Charles G. Hays]

"chief" on a form and then ceremoniously brought mats instead of wreaths—again I hesitate, but truth will out—the school doormats, which they placed over the chief! I must remark that the mats were well shaken. They laid the dead chief's spear beside him. The head of this spear was a hollow beef bone, to remind us that there is a lack of minerals in New Zealand, and that the cannibals utilised human bones instead. They also brought other small bones to school and pretended they were native needles, fish-hooks, and other things formed from human bones. From the "Children's Encyclopædia" they found out how to cut out boomerangs. Naturally they very soon cut out some of these weapons to add to the realism. Imagine, too, their joy on discovering a real boomerang in the Worthing Free Museum.

The part which taxed their ingenuity considerably was arrived at when the chiefs attending the funeral had to speak. The "crying lady" (albeit a boy!) could perform *her* part to a nicety, so she was told off to howl loudly whenever the chieftains failed for lack of words. What they did say, I remember, was something like this:

FIRST CHIEF. Oh, he was brave and he was noble!

SECOND CHIEF. He had the heart of a lion.

THIRD CHIEF. And the legs of a fox!

FOURTH CHIEF. He had the appetite of an ostrich.

FIRST CHIEF. He slew many enemies. :

SECOND CHIEF. Yea, he slew his thousands !

THIRD CHIEF. He could throw the boomerang.

FOURTH CHIEF. He could climb the gum-trees, &c.

All this was punctuated by solemn marches to and fro, whilst spears were rattled on the ground at intervals, and the "crying lady" howled in ~~the~~ pauses.

Then the chiefs had a feast cooked in the native way as described to them by the visitor.

When we had finished our New Zealand games I realised that, personally, I knew far more of that place than I had ever known before. Of course names of places had been duly noted as well as manners, customs, and history. And while mentioning history, it may interest readers to know that our "Captain Cook" managed to introduce, in an ingenious way, the history of the places he explored. In calling at Tasmania he said: "Oh, this island was discovered by the Dutch. I remember that Tasman called here. He named it Van Diemen's Land." And when he "sighted" the next land, he said: "This must be the land discovered by those clever Dutchmen again. They called it New Zealand, after their home." All this was brought

out in a conversational way by the "Captain" and his "First Mate."

Occasionally, to be quite sure that all they said was taken in, the "producers" of plays would call upon the chorus to come out and "see if you can go through our parts."

Could they? It was just a case of rushing for the chief parts, never mind the difficulty. Of course this only spurred the elder scholars on to make their parts fuller and more perfect, and in this way a healthy rivalry was promoted between the different classes.

Frequently, too, the elder scholars would write out little geography plays, abridged and adapted from their own plays, and in their own time, for the infants or lower-class scholars. I would allow them to conduct these—quite by themselves—and so a new school "tone" or tradition was formed which would persist, if allowed, automatically. I would frequently hear the little infants saying: "When I get up in the 'big room' I am going to be Captain Cook, and you can be a cannibal," and such things.

The best result, in my opinion, of this method of studying geography was the way in which the scholars—left to themselves—connected geography and history-places with real persons and real deeds. When they studied Africa, they played games about Livingstone and other explorers, and in this way gradually unfolded the history and geography of Africa.

CHAPTER IX

ARITHMETIC AND COMPOSITION

ARITHMETIC may become a delightful subject when taught largely by means of plays. We first made our arithmetic games correlate with the week's Nature Study, taking care that they did not become haphazard and purposeless. For instance, it is quite possible, when the weekly Nature lesson happens to be on "acorns and oak-trees," and the arithmetic lesson deals with the "six times table," to blend the two into a game, rather than to play any game with acorns which happens to enter one's head. The teacher may be quite methodical—as it behoves one to be in a subject like arithmetic—and yet, with the art of concealing art, she may not allow her method to obtrude itself too apparently before the scholars' mental vision.

In a subject like arithmetic it must be allowed that the teacher must "lead" a little more than in other subjects. From its very nature it is evident that the children cannot be allowed a perfectly free hand or chaos must result. But after a good be-

ginning has been made, they may quite safely be allowed to help and suggest in the preparation of plays almost as much as in such subjects as geography and history. Here is an example of a simple game which Standard I. children helped to "make up":

Six boys pretended to be oak-trees. They filled their pockets and hands with acorns. Stretching out their arms, they pretended these were branches. Another boy represented the north wind, and ran round puffing and shaking the "trees." Down fell the acorns! Harry pretended to be a little boy with a basket gathering acorns. Two other boys were pigs and ate up the acorns which were left. They merely pretended to eat and in reality pocketed them.

"How many have you eaten?" asked the teacher.

The class wrote down the answer of both boys.

"How many have you, Harry?"

Harry duly counted and his answer was jotted down.

"Now, how many are left on the trees?"

This was noted too.

"Then, if Harry gathered so many, and the pigs ate a total of so many, and so many were left on the trees, how many acorns were there at first? How many fell from the tree?" &c.

Then all the class worked out the answers and wrote down the sums in the correct form.

Tables can be very prettily learned when "played" with bunches of snowdrops or other flowers. A little girl selling snowdrops at so much a bunch with so many in each bunch—say six (the children having made up one bunch each)—may teach her companions the six times table unconsciously.

GIRL. Buy my snowdrops to-day, lady? Only one penny a bunch!

LADY. How many are there in a bunch?

GIRL. Six, lady.

LADY. Then I will have two bunches and that will make twelve snowdrops.

Enter MOTHER with three little CHILDREN.

GIRL. Snowdrops, lady? Only one penny a bunch of six!

MOTHER. Oh, how pretty they look! Yes, I will buy a little nosegay for each of my three children. How many snowdrops shall we have altogether then?

CHILDREN. Three sixes—that will be eighteen.

MOTHER. And if I have a bunch too?

CHILDREN. Four sixes! Why, that will be twenty-four.

[GIRL goes to greengrocer's shop, kept by small Boy.]

GIRL. Can you take some of my snowdrops to-day, sir? You can have them at five bunches for fourpence—six in a bunch.

BOY. Yes, I'll have fourpenn'orth. Looks a little lot for thirty snowdrops, doesn't it?

GIRL. You can count them, sir. All correct?

BOY. If I had six bunches, it wouldn't look much more, and yet there would be—let's see—thirty-six flowers.

And so on, varying the conversations until the table is complete. The same game may supply a good mental arithmetic lesson in dealing with short money sums.

We all know how, as children, we delighted in playing with dough or putty. Acting on this knowledge, I always taught the earliest lessons of arithmetic with the aid of some flour and water dough. With this children can play at making little loaves. It is not difficult for a child to master the fact that "ten units equal one ten," when he has made ten little dough loaves out of a piece of dough the same size as one big loaf. He soon learns addition and subtraction sums if he collects all the "little loaves" and makes one big loaf out of every ten small ones, for he sees the "answer" in the concrete before him.

The next "game" naturally suggests itself, viz., playing at shops. Our first shop was a drapery store, and I left the girls to prepare the details. They threw a great deal of enthusiasm and energy into their work and prepared a game which interested all of us for several lessons. They made cabinets and chests of drawers with the aid of cardboard boxes, fixing brass buttons for handles and making the drawers pull in and out. Fathers and brothers became interested and sent worn-out silk ties and frayed collars for the "Gentlemen's Department." Mothers sent treasures in the shape of any small garments, now out of use—all cleanly washed—for the "Ready-made Department." One of the elder girls achieved a triumph, for she spent several evenings plaiting up "bass" or "matt" (such as is used in tying up lettuces) in a good imitation of straw plait. The plaits, when sewed together, made splendid French confections in dollies' hats—especially when plumed with chickens' feathers. Later she became more ambitious and made hats large enough for children to wear. These the "mothers," who were intending purchasers, "tried" on their children's heads and bargained for, whilst the shopwomen displayed their charms and the cashier in the desk took the money and gave change—using cardboard coins, of course. A feature of this game was the set of real "billheads" used, which were

*Photo by*

SCHOOL GARDENS. THE FLOWER GARDENS.

Charles G. Hyde

supplied to me, as they are to real shops, by a noted firm for advertisement's sake.

From some source or other they procured the long strips of white and coloured paper which paper-hangers cut off wall-paper, called "trimmings." These they made up into neat rolls and hanks, and styled them ribbons or tapes. One girl carefully cut out white paper "embroidery" by folding the strips several times and then cutting nicks and curves which, when the paper was unfolded, showed a repetition of the lace pattern. Others begged from the drapers' shops the ribbon rolls with white paper interlinings (the paper which is rolled up with the ribbons on the roll) of various widths. The girls in the drapers' shops, sympathising with the object for which the rolls were intended, kindly saved both paper and rolls carefully for the children. The latter coloured these "ribbons" by means of crayon and paint. The object of all this trouble, they explained to me, was to enable them to ask for various colours and lengths, and be served properly without too much make-believe. When real ribbon was used, it could not be cut and then used again. With paper an exact length could be measured, cut, and taken away. A yard measure was fixed on the "counter" (desk) by means of drawing-pins, and by its aid the children mastered the difficulties of yards, halves, quarters, and eighths,

and received practice in calculating the prices of these at so much per yard, and in making out the bills correctly, and in giving the correct "change."

To add the necessary touch of realism the girls borrowed the school screen (an old fourfold one), so that they could have a proper door to open and shut. From the top corner of this "door" they hung a hand-bell on string, so that each "customer's" arrival was duly announced by the tinkling of the bell, and everything was quite proper and "shoppy." I need hardly say that, since all this took place immediately in front of the class, there was no need for the teacher to *tell* the children to "pay attention," nor did she need to have any fears that the class was not thoroughly keen about adding up the various sums at payment time. The scholars would not have been real children if they had not been desperately anxious to catch the cashier giving the wrong change.

A miniature post-office, with tiny notepaper and envelopes, stamps, telegram forms, and postal orders gave rise to another game, which combined the writing of letters (composition), directing of envelopes, a little geography in the correct placing of the various towns, and arithmetic.

Land-measuring with a real chain made a good game for the elder boys, who actually by this means measured up and made a "wheat-field" (to scale)

in the playground. After watching it grow they had a real harvest (one boy brought his tame rabbit and hid it in the cornfield, so that, when the corn was cut, a real rabbit might be found!) and got a neighbouring farmer to have their wheat threshed with his. The grain which he sent back they measured up, and then worked by proportion the amount which might have come off an ordinary-sized wheat-field, prices, profits, &c. Further, they sent the bag of grain to the miller's to be ground, and the girls baked a loaf out of the resulting flour. Could boyish enterprise do more? And, remember, the wheat-field was planted on what had previously been hard, flinty playground—beaten down by generations of little scholars with sturdy legs and good strong boots! The young pioneers removed about two tons of flints and marl, with which they repaired the lane leading to the school, and filled the space with road-drift and leaf-mould of their own collecting. So that the wheat-field was quite a serious game such as bigger boys would find to their taste.

Liquid measure was attacked by means of a milk-shop, with (do not laugh, gentle reader!) chalky water for milk. Sea sand answered admirably for sugar when dry, and when wet might be cut out for butter, &c. So pounds, ounces, drams, and stones soon presented few difficulties.

This short account by no means disposes of the arithmetic games, but it outlines a few of the most typical ones. We found out that very few children were naturally accurate when using weights and scales; not a few corrected themselves of unhandiness and clumsiness by these means, so that we were learning something beside arithmetic.

On "shopping" mornings the scholars would arrive much earlier than usual, shortly after 8 a.m., and I would find the "shop" set out finely on my arrival, looking quite like a real shop, with lines hung with goods on show, every window-ledge spread with goods, and the proprietor or proprietress—positively bursting with importance—ticketing goods and generally stocktaking.

The elder girls invented a game to improve composition and teach letter-writing. Its plot was briefly this: A merchant, seated in his office, soliloquises on his need of an office-boy. He decides to advertise in a local paper, and, taking up his pen, drafts an advertisement enumerating the qualities he expects to find in the boy. He talks all the while he is writing, so that the class "hears" his letter being written, and all jot it down as he speaks. (This kept all the class employed, and really was an exercise in dictation as well.) After sealing up, addressing and stamping the envelope, he dropped it into our tiny post-office. Another boy,



Photo 1

"Clarke - Hyde."

MOTHERS' DRAMATIC FOLK-SONGS.
(One disguised in her husband's snipe and gaiters.)

who was "postman," collected it and delivered it to the office of the newspaper. There the "editor" read it aloud, and, in dumb show, the advertisement was printed, the newspapers given out to several small newspaper boys (who ran about crying, "Paper! Paper-r-r!"), and duly bought by different boys supposed to be looking out for situations. Three of these decided to apply for the post, and we follow the writing and composition of their letters, as was done with the merchant's letter. The boys were quite left to themselves to compose, and those who were waiting to write went outside the door, so as not to hear the letters of the others. All these letters were "posted" and "delivered," and the merchant read them aloud in his office. He selected the best, and wrote them a letter appointing an interview. The boys came and were questioned, &c. Finally, he engaged the one who wrote the best letter—as regards spelling, composition, and writing. The class used to help him in his choice from the letters they had jotted down. When the game was finished the teacher used to turn the blackboard, on the back of which she had also written the letters, and, in a short talk, would point out defects or mistakes. The object of making the class write all the letters, as well as the actors, was that they might be better prepared, when their turn to be "clerks" came, to write an intelligible letter without wasting time unduly.

CHAPTER X

NATURE STUDY NEWLY APPROACHED

EVEN Nature Study, which we had long made full use of in the form of direct study of Nature, was newly approached by the children when they took matters in hand. They first made up a form of game which would supply the place of a Nature Ramble on the mornings when the weather was unfavourable for a real ramble.

One of the boys would impersonate the Schoolmaster. A few of the other children would pretend to be flowers then in season, and stand at intervals down the room, holding some specimens of the flower they impersonated in their hands. The rest of the class were the "scholars out for a ramble." They formed up in twos, and, setting out from the top of the room, arrived at the first "flower." On one occasion this happened to be a sweetpea plant in flower. The following dialogue then took place :

SCHOLAR. Oh, here is a pretty Sweetpea hanging over this garden fence !

SWEETPEA. He is wrong. I am not *hanging* over it at all ! I climbed up here on purpose to look over at the sun. If he tries to pull me down, he will find I am holding on quite firmly.

SECOND SCHOLAR. Good-morning, pretty flower ! We want to know more about you. Can you tell us anything ?

SCHOOLMASTER. Look well and carefully at the flower and it will tell you its secrets.

SWEETPEA (*in a high-pitched, weak voice*). I belong to a very large family. There are over four thousand seven hundred of us !

CHILDREN (*in chorus*). Just fancy !

SWEETPEA. My family were always rather helpless, for they never grew a strong, upright stem amongst them. Years ago Queen Flora took pity on them and sent her Court Physician to examine their poor weak backs. He invented a way to hold their heads up by fitting them out some little ropes to twine round a firm support—just as poor cripples have crutches. Now they are able to hold themselves up and climb much higher than most garden flowers.

THIRD SCHOLAR. I know one reason why you want to climb so high.

SWEETPEA. You may guess, and I will tell you if you are right.

THIRD SCHOLAR. You want to shoot your seeds as far away as possible in all directions. I

remember you twist your pods in two spirals, giving a little jerk and twist at each turn, and so shoot your seeds out. If you are higher up, the seeds, of course, shoot away farther.

SWEETPEA. Very good guess, little boy! I believe you are right. But now, little visitors, look at my tendrils. Can you guess what they are and where they came from?

FOURTH SCHOLAR. I expect I can guess. They grow where leaves ought to be, and they look like "leaf-bones" without the "flesh." Were they once leaves?

SWEETPEA. Clever boy! Yes, they are the remains of leaves. But instead of doing the work of leaves, they now work at clinging and holding on tightly.

FIFTH SCHOLAR. But you have a very funny stem. It is more like a leaf than a stem.

SWEETPEA. I wonder whether some little boy or girl can explain that. Have a good think, and then try.

SIXTH SCHOLAR. I know. When the green "flesh" of some of your leaves stopped growing, there was then less leaf-work being done; and you did not want *less* nourishment to help you climb, but more! So the material of which those leaves would have been made was used to make your stem wide and flat, and able to do the work of a leaf.



[Photo by]

MOTHERS AT PLAY. "A CUP OF TEA."

[Charles Hyde.]

SWEETPEA. Right again ! You see, Nature never wastes anything.

SCHOOLMASTER. Do you ever have any exciting times here in the garden ?

SWEETPEA. Just at present there is the Sweetpea and Blue Cornflower race on.

SCHOLARS. Oh, tell us about that !

SWEETPEA. Well, the White Sweetpea and the Blue Cornflower wanted to find out which could grow the taller. The Blue Cornflower took great pains to strengthen her stems, for she knew how the strong storms of wind blow even in June. The Sweetpea waited for the Cornflower to grow, inch by inch ; and then, artfully throwing out a tendril, she would wind it securely round the Cornflower and draw herself up level with her rival. Look ! You can see for yourselves, White Sweetpea has thrown all kind feeling to the winds and has reared her head quite a foot above the Cornflower, and has cruelly twined her tendrils even round the Cornflower's blossoms, forcing them to support her.

SCHOOLMASTER. I have known some children like that. They will let others work and learn for them, and, instead of using their own brains and powers, they borrow from others.

The scholars would then pass on to the next flower, and another dialogue would take place.

These plays were always the scholars' own. Generally the dialogue was spontaneous, and went on in a kind of debate, during which many interesting things were discovered. For instance, in the early springtime one of the children impersonated the Hazel Catkin; and to illustrate the way in which the catkin is first stiff and almost upright, but afterwards limp and pendant, she held a string of beads pressed up so tightly on the string that they could be held in an upright position. Then she relaxed the string and showed how it immediately hung downwards.

In the short specimen play which I have quoted, the "Schoolmaster" had "got up" his matter beforehand in conjunction with the "flowers." But, none the less, it was their own.

In connection with their Nature Study, and as a variant on the "Ramble" play, the girls used to make very pretty "Fairy" plays, introducing stories on Nature which had been compiled from their Nature Study for the week. Generally these were written in verse, each fairy talking in couplets made by herself. Into these plays, too, they would weave the Morris dance, and generally they would borrow the Folk music for tunes to fit their couplets.

One such game was called "Spring." A girl represented Queen Flora asleep in an empty garden. Suddenly a bright little girl, dressed to represent

"Sunshine," sprang in, touched the sleeping Queen Flora with her wand, and said: "Awake! I am the Fairy of Springtime, and I come to bid you awake!"

The queen slowly got up, and, seating herself on a throne (chair with curtains draped over it), said, "Call Fairy Aconite." Crinkled paper had been freely used in getting up costumes for the little crowd of spring flowers—correctly called by the queen in the order in which the spring flowers are expected to arrive. Each fairy had prepared a verse descriptive of her own personality and peculiarities, which she either said or warbled. When all were assembled, a dialogue ensued, summing up all they knew of spring and spring flowers; any verses of good poetry from standard authors bearing on the subject were repeated, something original in the way of dances or tableaux was arranged, and the fairies tripped off.

CHAPTER XI

MANUAL WORK

MUCH stress is now being laid on manual occupations in school, and, as I have previously remarked in this book, I nearly always found that the children's games connected themselves naturally with some form of hand-work. I deemed this sufficient for children of the Elementary School age—that they should be able to use their fingers and hands without awkwardness in making such things for themselves as could not be more economically bought. This also had the double advantage of neither tending to spoil any one trade nor to neglect unduly any other. I have described how the children built their own shed when they played at being "Tig," and how they excavated flints and marl from their playground to form a garden. In this way they formed a large vegetable garden in which they grew wonderful marrows, beans, peas, potatoes, cabbages, &c. They also planted cuttings of fruit trees, begged from fathers, and in time had a very nice fruit garden, with goose-

berries, raspberries, black currants, strawberries, a peach, and a young apple-tree. When they needed a glass seed frame, they made an amateur one out of a packing-case. Then, to encourage them, one was bought out of the school funds. Our object was not exactly to teach children living in an enlightened country like England that they must make, by tedious amateur processes, everything they needed. To that, on principle, I objected. I merely wanted to see how they set about to make something which would answer their purpose supposing they had not the wherewithal to buy the correct article. In the same way they made a little wooden fence for their vegetable garden (subsequent to a nocturnal visit from a cow, who ate up all their young cabbages and trampled everything else!) out of some old desks. To do them justice, the posts of that fence were "well and truly" driven home, for they stand there to this day.

Besides all this, the boys gradually made little semicircular plots for separate flower gardens all round the playground, and in time converted a strip of ground under a south wall into a very fine herbaceous border, with an extremely good collection of flowers for every season, including some specially nice hollyhocks of every colour and description. So that the children's Nature Study called forth the accompanying manual work of

simple carpentry and gardening, although these subjects *were not taught*.

The girls had their own form of hand-work. Naturally this mostly took the form of some branch of needlework, crochet, or knitting. Occasionally it took the form of cookery. At Christmas-time they "played" at making Christmas puddings, which were boiled and partaken of by the whole school on the day of breaking up for the Christmas holidays.

On Shrove Tuesday pancakes were made in school, and, after being fried (each girl taking part by being allowed to beat the batter and fry one), they were eaten with great gusto. Other informal cookery included cake-making—everything except the actual baking being done in school (the baking had to take place in the kitchen of the teachers' dwelling-house), bread-making, simple puddings, a treacle tart, and other delightful things. All these "dainties" were needed for games and were made as part of the play. On one occasion the girls wanted something more elaborate to answer the purpose of a wedding-cake. I therefore showed them how to ice a cake, letting them assist me. One of the girls who assisted profited by the lesson, for she went home and practised it again. Less than a year afterwards she gained a prize for an iced cake in a competition open to the county.

A few years later she made and iced her own wedding-cake. I tasted it and can testify that it left nothing to be desired—but another helping.

In their needlework the girls played a good deal at doll-dressing, and the garments thus made were always cut out correctly to scale, being quite practical affairs in miniature. I never limited them as regards the "fancy" stitches, if they liked to use such. The trimmings were knitted by the children themselves, which led them to appreciate daintiness and neatness, and promoted a desire to make garments and lace for themselves as well as the dolls. I am now convinced that children learn to dislike needlework when it is presented to their notice in the form of large, unwieldy garments of ugly appearance, with long, tiring, monotonous seams. With miniature garments they get variety, and more quickly see a finished result of their labours. We allowed the use of the sewing-machine for certain work in school—notably the long, tedious seams. The girls frequently dressed a doll, making the whole of the garments with the sewing-machine—except the buttonholes—and would make it an outfit suitable for a young girl going to service, even making outdoor garments and fashionable hats. If I allowed them a free hand, it was quite delightful to notice how many dainty little knick-knacks they would make

—tiny pocket-handkerchiefs beautifully hemstitched, with the dollies' initials worked in the corner, about an inch square.

Sometimes we would play at dressmakers' shops, and little girls would come to be measured. Patterns of garments to measure would then be drafted and fitted on, amidst the criticism and advice of the onlookers. This gave rise to investigations into prices and quantities of material; and, naturally, the questioning came, not from the teacher, but from the children who were playing at "dress-makers."

Of course we had included some good books on pattern-making and cutting-out in our library, so that the girls soon found out how to get a good pattern and preserved all their successful ones for future use.



[Charles H. H. & Co.]

THE MOTHERS' BAND.

CHAPTER XII

AFTER SCHOOL AGE

So far I have dealt with the Dramatic Method as used in the Elementary School for scholars under fourteen years of age. In this short chapter I should very much like to outline briefly the way in which the work, begun in the schoolroom, entered the home and after-school life in the village.

Just as the Nature Study movement filtered through the children's conversations at home until the parents imbibed it, and went for Nature rambles on Sunday afternoons with their children, so the Dramatic Method soon took hold on the home life.

It was not many years before old scholars, remembering the interesting plays at school, in which they had joined, and wishing to do more than help their little brothers and sisters to make "properties," came and asked me to assist them during their winter evenings to act some suitable plays. The result of this was that we organised a sort of Dramatic Club for men, and after one or two false starts

in the choice of plays, we hit upon a Shakespearean play suitable for being played by men. We first essayed to act one scene from Shakespear's "Julius Cæsar"—the murder scene. Our cast consisted entirely of working-men of the village—some were fathers of scholars, others themselves "old" scholars. It was quite an inspiration to observe how really interested they all were in learning their parts, in discussing them, in studying them so as to bring out all that Shakespear intended. They would frequently have long discussions over the meanings of words and allusions in the play, and went so far as to buy histories of Rome to clear up points in the play and to get their costumes and properties correct in detail.

When one scene was mastered, however, the men were enthusiastic and demanded more. So we added another scene, and so on until the complete play, minus the scene introducing Portia and Calphurnia, was well known. Then we engaged the Worthing Theatre Royal, and gave the play to an enthusiastic, overflowing audience. But the actual performance of the play is not the point I wish to emphasise; it is the fact that the men were educated enough to find ample amusement in one of Shakespear's least droll plays. So much were they really interested that, on one wet Saturday, they spent eight consecutive hours (with a short interval for

tea!) in practising with their Roman costumes on. At the outset we had intended to meet on one evening in the week. Towards the end the men would hardly be content without five meetings per week.

Their properties, although mostly of their own making, were quite correct; and the scene in which Brutus and Cassius quarrel, and where Cæsar's ghost appears, was so artistically got up, and so well acted, that it called forth the admiration of old and hardened newspaper critics on big London "Dailies."

The matter did not end there, for the mothers of the village not only acted plays but invented them. They, too, met at the school—which thus became really a centre of light and learning—and there practised plays written by one of their number. The first of these was entitled "A Cup of Tea," and contained some good local "hits." Another play was patriotic and written *in verse*! The mothers also practised the Morris dance and dramatised folk-songs just as the scholars in the day school were doing. In the latter art they excelled, for they knew a good store of the Sussex folk-songs.

Comical in the extreme was their "band" of various instruments, which they managed to play tunefully. Really it seemed we had reached the ideal state of village life, and had made one or

two steps towards reintroducing "Merrie England." Whether this was a result of the school method I leave others to judge. And let no one be afraid that the result of such teaching will be to set the whole community "acting mad." I have heard of none of the everyday work of the village being neglected. But I did observe there were a few more cheerful faces to be seen among those who took part in the work.

Certainly it is that one result of this kind of education will be to foster the good taste of our people, developing the capacities of our children, and enabling them to find their propensity in choosing their life's career.

It seems to me that children trained on the lines indicated very inadequately in this book will be well fitted to take their part in the world. They will at least have had a fuller childhood than some of their predecessors, and, having acted well their parts in school, we will send them forth confidently, remembering that "all the world's a stage."